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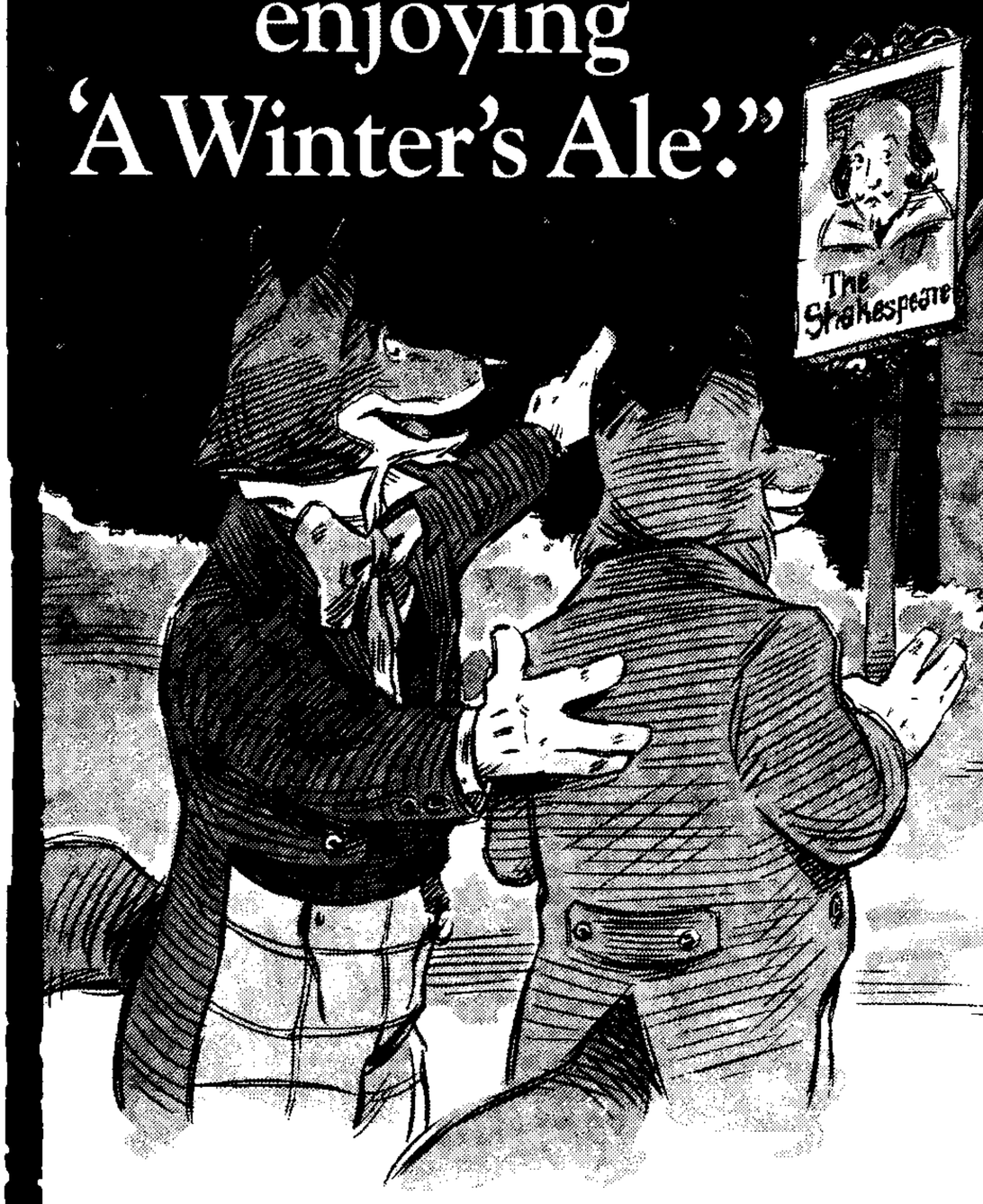

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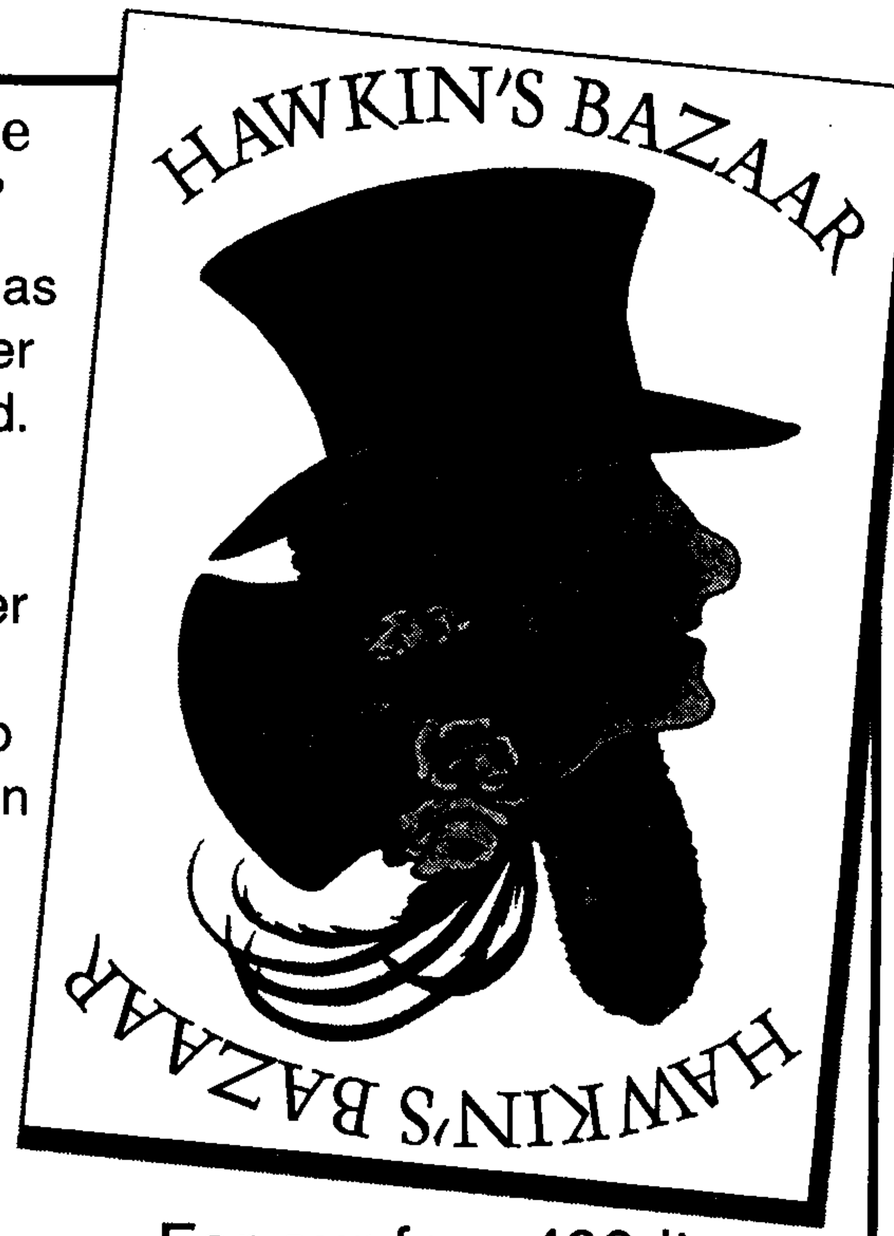

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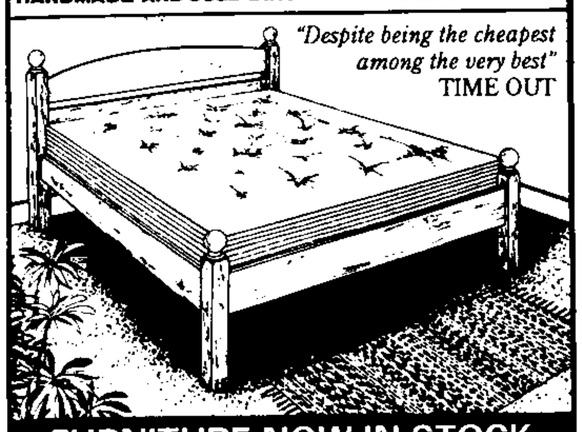

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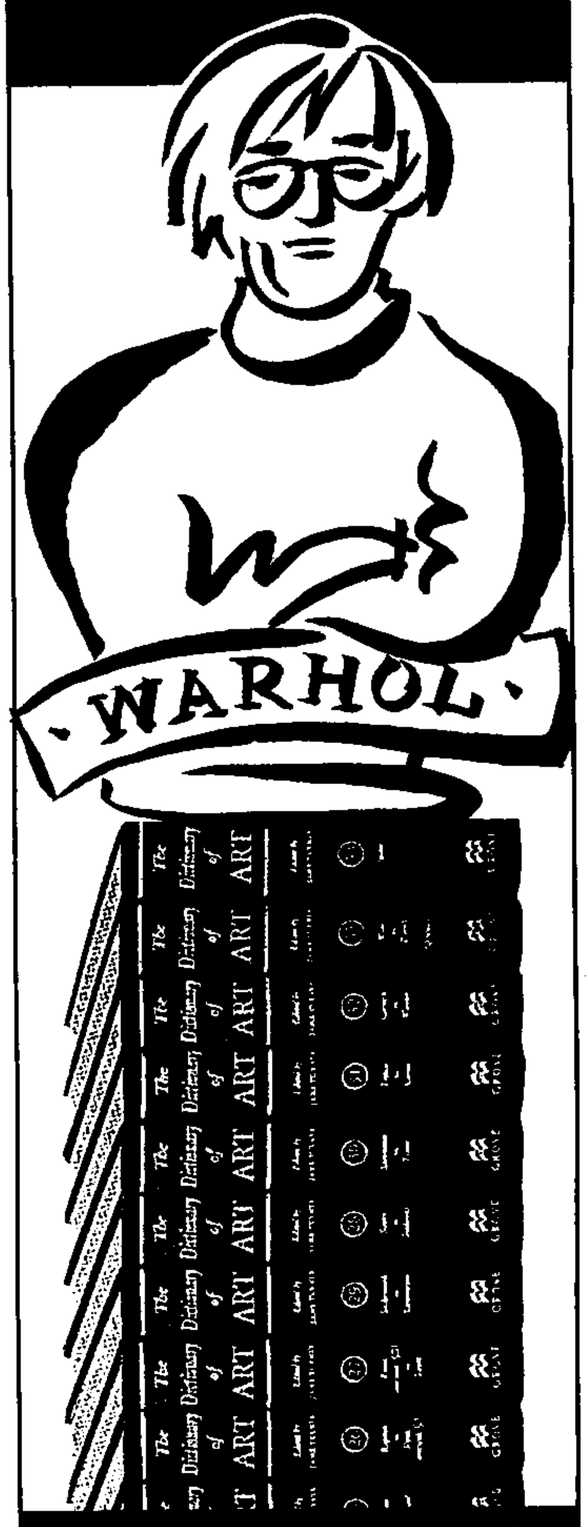

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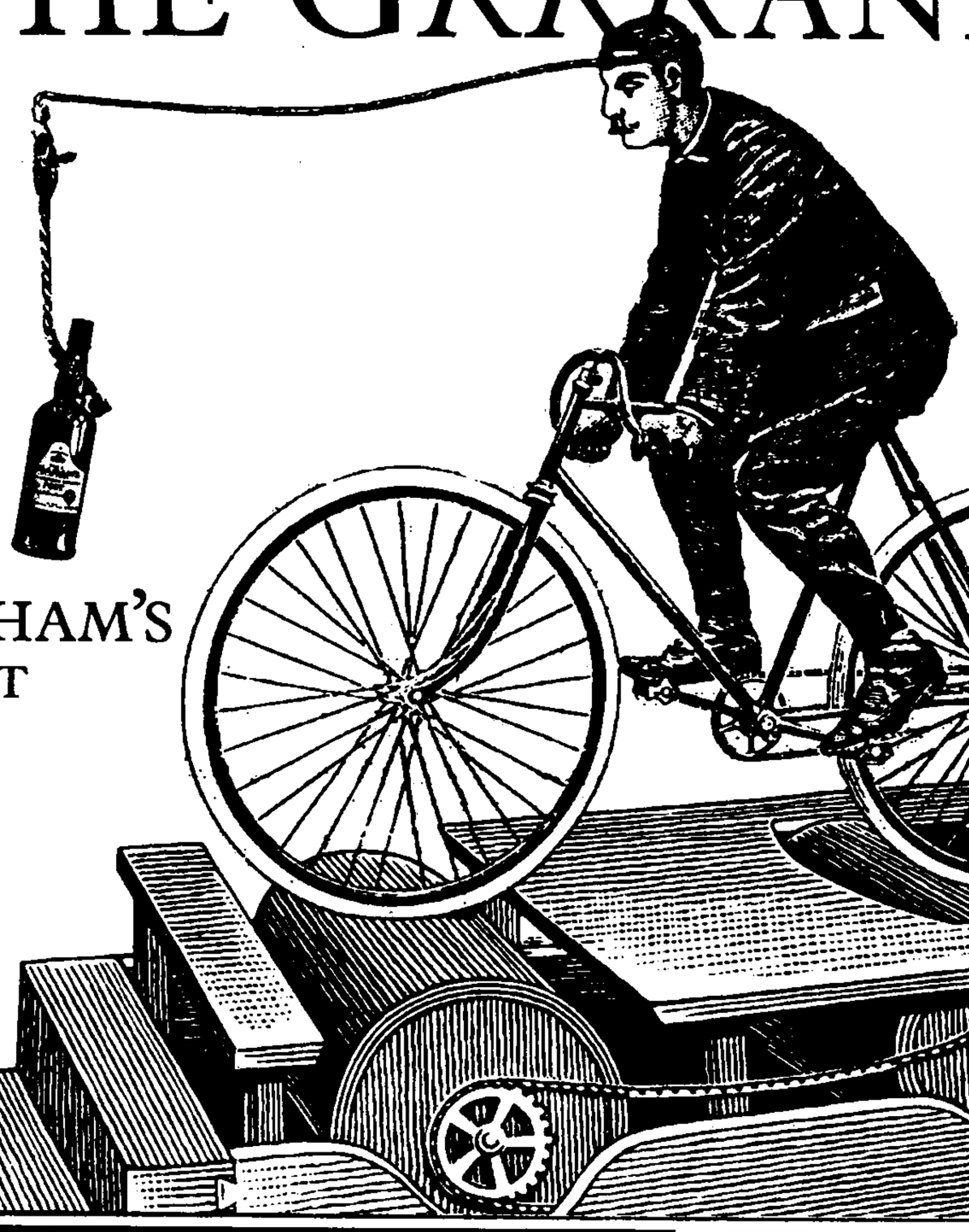

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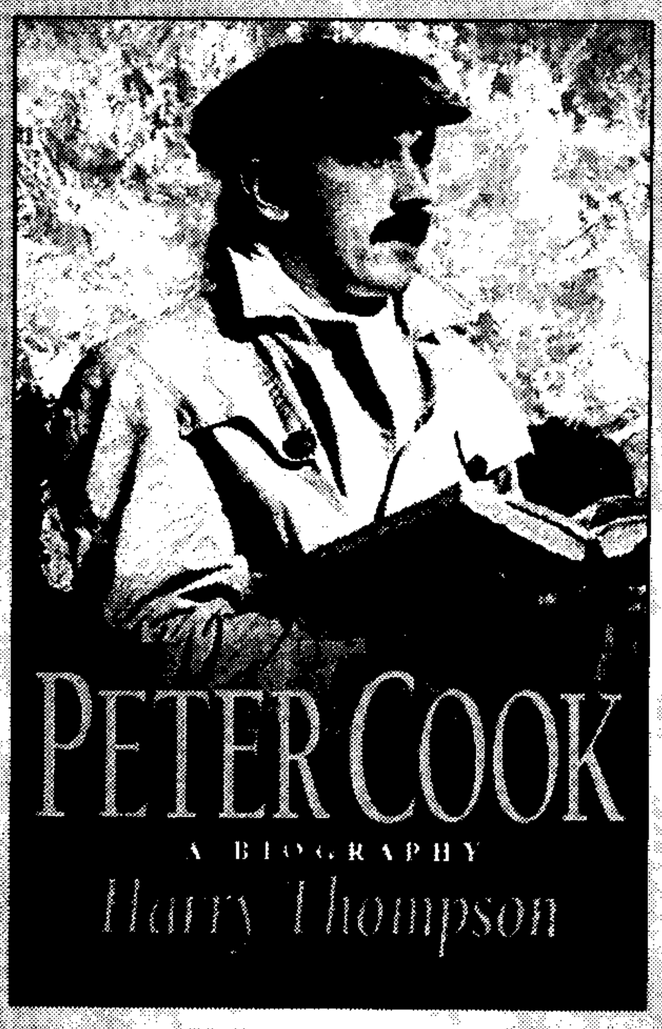

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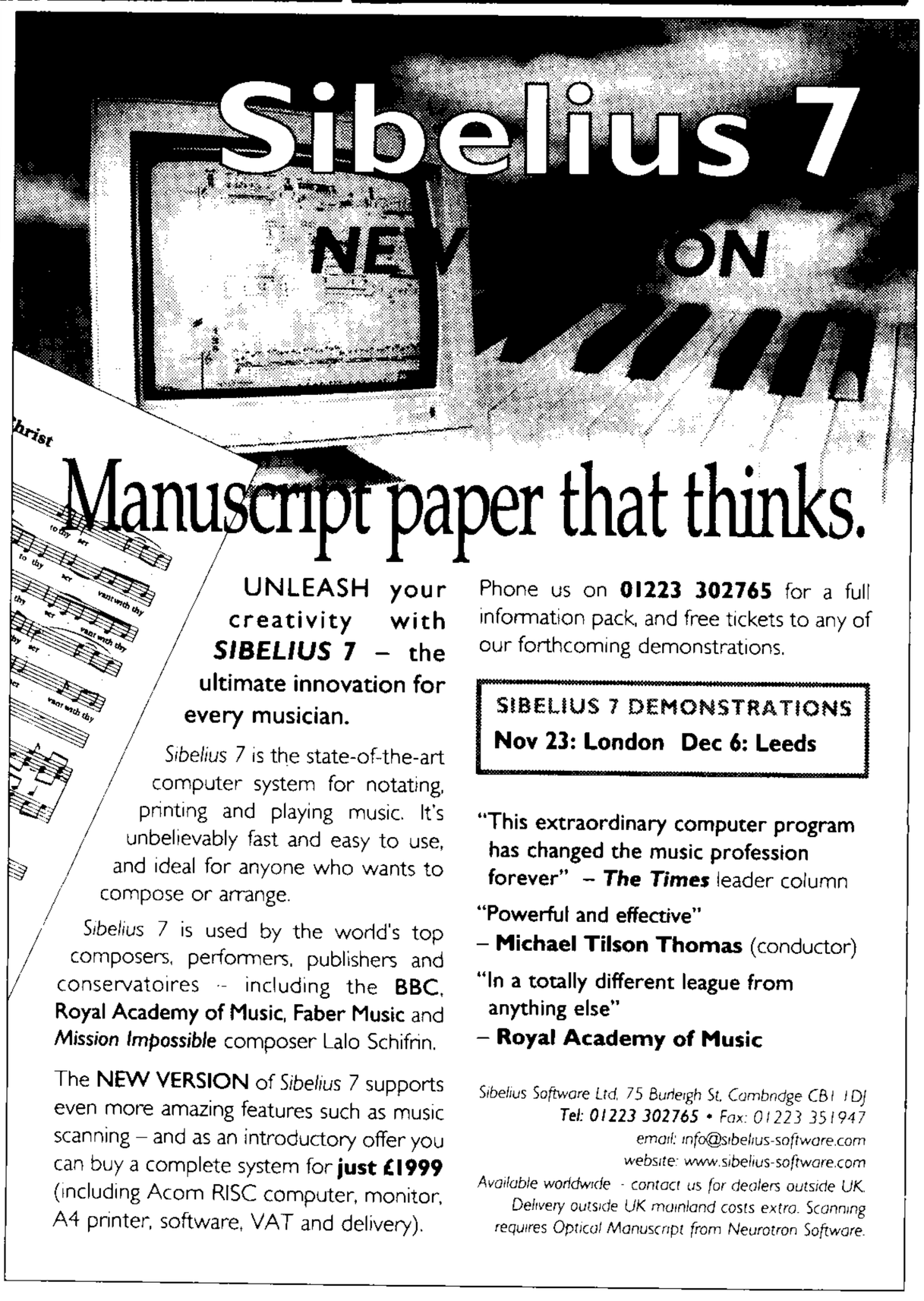

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Gnome

THE SUGGESTION that there is a conflict of interest between my generous support of the Labour Party and my coincidental ownership of the Formula Gnome Grand Prix Team is a disgraceful slur.

I salute the government's courageous decision to back down over tobacco advertising in Formula Gnome racing, which they reached only after long and hard lobbying by independent lawyers working for me.

Mr Blair bravely accepted their objective argument that any ban would have an appalling effect on British industry and put at risk the jobs of nearly 500 million workers in my Northamptonshire factory (The Portakabin, Unit 7(b), Viking Trading Estate, Silverstone).

Mrs Tessa Jolly, the Health Minister and my sister-in-law, is to be commended for her pragmatic approach to a tricky issue that could have resulted in disaster for this country. And it would not just have been the collapse of the British economy. Clearly, if the government had barred tobacco advertising from this ancient traditional British sport, there would also have been mass suicides, the flooding of London by El Niño and an invasion of body-snatching aliens. *(Aren't you overdoing this? E.S.)*

E. Strobes (pp Lord Gnome),
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COLOUR SECTION

The following story contains strong language. Readers of a nervous disposition are advised to turn the page immediately.

THE bizarre politics of the times were well summed up in the following exchange between two backbenchers, one a Labour leftwinger, the other a former prime minister: the Rt Hon John Major, now Tory MP for Huntingdon.

Major, stopping the Labour man in his tracks: "Just a word — isn't this government a load of crap?"

Labour man: "Er yes, John. What do you mean?"

Major: "This rubbish about tuition fees. They put that up to me twice, and I told them to fuck off. The only man in the cabinet who supported them was that fucking lunatic Redwood."

FURIOUS and swift was the indignation from Downing Street and the department of health at the suggestion that the Tessa Jowell affair was another sleaze story of the type we got used to under the Tories.

But one or two simple facts about the row appear to have escaped the public health minister and her champions in Downing Street.

The first point about politicians declaring an interest is that the public should know about it. Tessa Jowell declared her husband's interest — as a lawyer, David Mills was a legal adviser and former director of a Formula One company — to the secretary of the cabinet but not on any publicly-available register. She has never for instance declared his interest in the register of MPs' interests.

The second point is that any such interest should be publicly declared by any MP or minister over any issue under discussion where the interest "might reasonably be thought by others to influence his or her actions".

In local government, councillors with such an interest usually retire from any meeting which discusses anything to do with the interest and leave decisions to someone else. All through the day on 5 November Tessa Jowell appeared on the media defending the government's decision to exempt Formula One motor racing from its ban on tobacco advertising. No one watching or listening to her could possibly have known of her husband's association with a leading Formula One company. Since the possible conflict was so obvious, she should have declared the interest and left the Formula One decision and the announcement of it to someone else.

The embarrassing connection with Formula One probably explains the tortuous government reaction to questions about it. The questions came originally from the *Financial Times* and *Daily Mail*. When no reply to the questions was forthcoming all through the day of the 5th, the *FT* went ahead anyway and put the story on the front page. The *Mail* waited patiently for the department of health's reply, which came eventually (vetted by Peter Mandelson) at 1.30am. It did not make the *Mail* front page but did appear inside.

As so often, because the statement did not reveal the whole story (like the connection between the Formula One moguls, the Labour party treasury and Blair's office), it trickled out bit by bit, day by day causing the government maximum embarrassment. This is exactly what used to happen under the Tories.

PS: After the general election, in which Labour proudly proclaimed its hostility to tobacco advertising, the party's press officer in the north-west Martin Liptrot (*sic*), bunked off to a better job: as lobbyist for tobacco giant Philip Morris. A more famous lobbyist for Philip Morris is Margaret Thatcher.

LABOUR's policy on university tuition fees was boldly and succinctly set out by Tony Blair in a series of answers to key questions from the *Evening Standard* on 14 April, two weeks before the election.

He was asked: "Will Labour introduce tuition fees for higher education?" And he replied: "Labour has no plans to introduce tuition fees for higher education."

This "has no plans" formula was once used to great effect by Blair's heroine Margaret Thatcher, who was asked before the 1979 general election if the Tories would increase health prescription charges. She replied: "We have no plans to increase prescription charges." In office the Tories raised prescription charges relentlessly more than 25 times.

Explaining his U-turn to the Commons, Blair said (29 October): "I made it clear throughout that we should abide by the recommendations of the Dearing report".

Er... Blair's answer to the *Standard* made no reference to the Dearing report; and Dearing recommended keeping students' maintenance grants — which the Blair government is abolishing.

THE robust behaviour of the lord chancellor, Lord Irvine, is causing some distress in his department, where officials are worried about their new chief's sensitivity to publicity.

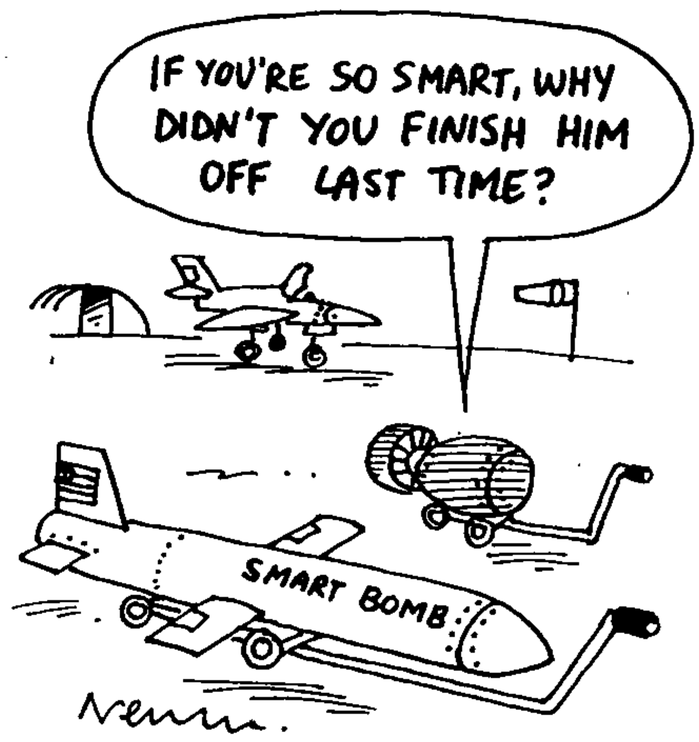
Two examples have led to special concern — and even a little deplorable ribaldly.

First came an article in the *Sunday Telegraph*, not long after the election, quoting "a waitress" at Ruth Rogers's fashionable restaurant in Hammersmith who reported the pompous peer sounding off about how he had "given up half a million pounds a year to do this job". After denying he had ever said such a thing, Irvine insisted that all 17 waitresses at the restaurant be personally interviewed, accused of being the subversive leaker and, if discovered, sacked.

The instructions were faithfully carried out but no culprit was found.

Then, on 28 October *The Lawyer* published a long, not entirely sycophantic profile of the lord chancellor, referring to his enormous wealth, his huge house in Scotland, his expensive home in London, his collection of paintings and his "permanent place among the Tuscany set".

On Irvine's personal instructions the wretched editors of *The Lawyer* were bullied into publishing a correction in the next issue, as follows: "LORD IRVINE. In our profile of Lord Irvine last week we said he owned 'a permanent place among the Tuscany set'. Lord Irvine has asked us to point out that he does not own any property in Tuscany."



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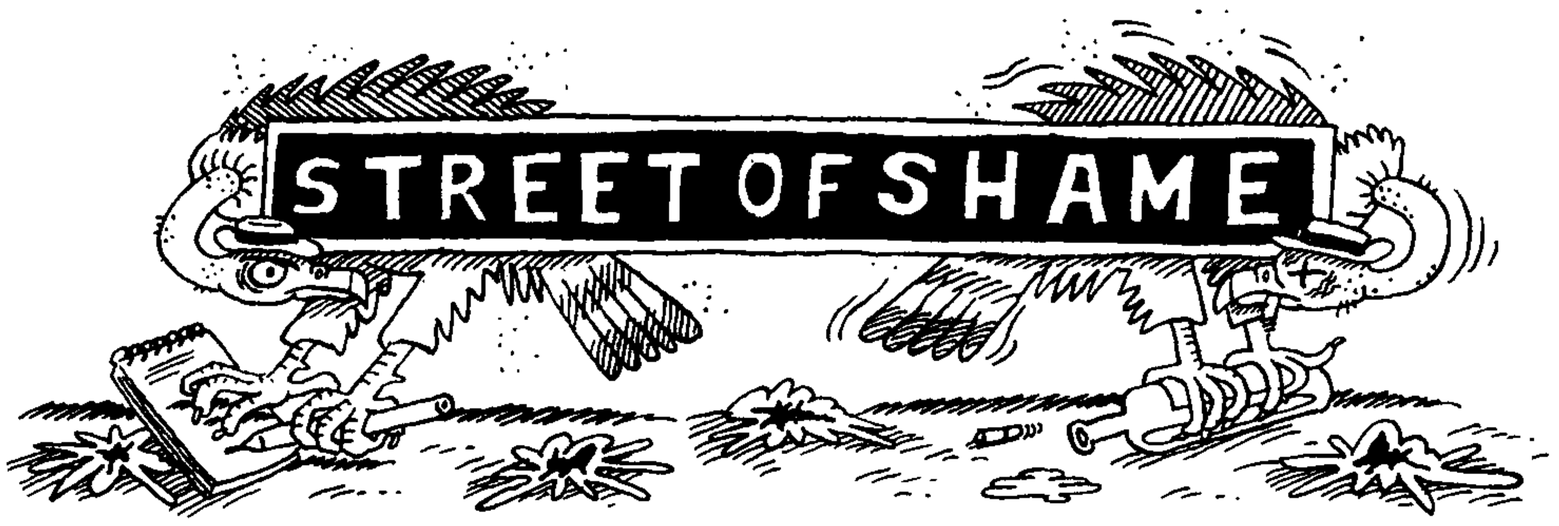


THE Louise Woodward verdict dominated tabloids and broadsheets alike on Sunday 2 November — with the startling exception of the *Sunday Mirror*, which filled its first eight pages with "Our Diana Diaries: Her True Story".

This silly saga was based on the "memoirs" of two junior hair stylists, Natalie from Chigwell and Tess from Cricklewood, who were ludicrously billed as "the two women who knew her best".

Senior hacks were bewildered because the supposedly sensational "diaries" contained nothing of note that hadn't already appeared elsewhere. The crimpers' tales — mainly attacks on Andrew Morton — had been sold to the paper by their ghostwriter Judy Wade, an old ratpack rival of Morton's whose work normally appears in those powerhouses of investigative journalism, *Hello!* and *OK!*

Last Sunday the rag gave yet more acres of space to this syrupy rubbish, and devoted its front page to the claim that Diana's real love was heart-surgeon Hasnat Khan. As *Eye* readers may recall, *Sunday Mirror* editrix Bridget "Death" Rowe splashed the news of Diana's "secret engagement" to Dr Khan only a few weeks before the princess's death, blissfully unaware that she was already heavily involved with Dodi Fayed. Both Diana and the doctor vehemently denied it. But now that Diana cannot protest, Bridget is desperate to try to justify her discredited "scoop".

The cost of her pathetic *amour propre* turns out to be very high. Hacks and executives at the *Sunday Mirror* have been told they cannot spend a penny until the new year because of the sum — said to be more than £100,000 — shelled out by Bridget for the hairdressers' hagiography.

No doubt her role as editor-in-chief and md of both the *Sunday Mirror* and the *People* had something to do with the fact that last Sunday both rags also went way overboard on "stories" that Princess Diana's death was no accident.

The *People*'s huge front-page splash — "DIANA *WAS* MURDERED!" — turned out to refer to, er, a readers' phone-in. Only 5,600 people had responded to this scientific exercise, but more than 90 percent apparently agreed with the murder theory. None of them had any evidence — but it is believed many are regular viewers of *The X-Files*.

A FEW moments of scripted small talk with the royal press corps on flights to and from South Africa, and the Prince of Wales had the snobbish hacks fawning over him and writing reams of gush about the new carin', sharin' royal Charlie.

The only hacks left out of the "charm offensive" were those who had been too sympathetic to Diana. Richard Kay was ignored on the plane and Lady Antonia Holden was banned from it entirely. Indeed, Lady Antonia was even refused accreditation but flew to South Africa and turned up in the midst of the ratpack around Chazza and the Spice Girls anyway. Charles was not amused.

NEW Labour magnate Lord Hollick, owner of the *Express*, has uncompromising ideals about freedom of speech and would never dream of instructing hacks on his paper about what they may or may not write about the creative efforts in other parts of his media empire.

Curiously, though, *Express* managing editor Lindsay Cook recently circulated the following memo: "Care must be taken when writing about TV and films PRODUCED BY THE COMPANY not to be gratuitously rude." Clearly this cannot be a reference to anything produced by the brilliant Channel Five, of which Hollick's United News and Media are major shareholders.

WHEN former foreign secretary Douglas Hurd agreed to be interviewed by *Evening Standard* hack Andrew Billen at the paper's Kensington offices, the frantic features team quickly purloined the editor's office (Hitler was away) for the elder statesman's interview.

Alas the plan went awry when Billen and Hurd entered the office and a bemused figure struggled up from behind the desk where he had been lying on some cushions. The prostrate figure was none other than Don Berry, associate editor, who had been taking an afternoon nap in an attempt to ease his back pain.

Unfortunately, Hurd immediately assumed Berry was the casualty of a heavy lunchtime session, slapped him on the back and boomed: "Don't get up for me old boy."

POOR Billy Connolly, the Big Yawn, is losing his grip: since his well-publicised scrap with a photographer he has become a self-appointed scourge of the press.

A recent victim was a humble sub-editor on the *Independent*'s arts desk who had the misfortune to answer the phone to the comedian. Connolly wanted to speak to Adrian Turpin, a freelance contributor, "regarding the shite he wrote about me in your paper this morning".

After checking with a colleague the hapless sub told Connolly he couldn't give out Turpin's home number. "I bet you can't, you cunt," the comic replied before slamming the phone down.

The *Indie* sub then checked that day's paper to see the offending article — but in vain. The article by Turpin had actually appeared in the *Guardian* and Connolly, campaigner for press accuracy, had got it wrong. "Are our comics a laughing stock?" asked the *Guardian* headline.

WHILE its middle market rival the *Daily Express* largely ignored the story of Yorkshireman Geoffrey Boycott's move to Dorset, the *Daily Mail* went crazy over the story.

Page three extolled the virtues of the "genteel south coast" and the "panoramic views across the world's second largest harbour of Poole" which Boycott will now enjoy. The debate over the move continued on to the editorial page; and on page 71 sports writer Ian Wooldridge praised "the balmiest and certainly the most expensive strip of coastline in Britain".

Could this blanket coverage have anything to do with another resident and fan of Dorset, one Sir David English, editor in chief of the *Daily Mail*?

VETERAN *Daily Telegraph* foreign correspondent Robert Fox has been made redundant by his cost-cutting newspaper.

His £45,000 redundancy cheque was in the bag until *Torygraph* executives spotted an item in the *Press Gazette* announcing that Fox was moving to *The European*. The pay-off was immediately slashed to £30,000.

Then came Fox's leaving-do shortly after his return from Algiers where he filed his final reports for the *Telegraph*. Hack Philip Sherwell arrived at the party and dashed over to Fox shouting: "I see you've started work for *The European* already." Sherwell had spotted a piece by Fox in the *European* complete with picture byline and filed from... Algiers.

Torygraph executives were furious that Fox had worked for their rival while still on the payroll and his cheque was immediately cancelled. Fox is now left to negotiate for a paltry pay-off and reflect on his bad luck that one of his colleagues actually reads the *European*.

THE Duchess of Fergiana's office continues to deny any £1m deal with *Hello!* As reported in the last *Eye* (936), the duchess was indeed flown to Madrid by the magazine's owner, Eduardo Sanchez Junco, in his private plane, but apparently the only agreements made were sealed with a handshake. Nothing was signed or even put in writing.

But the duchess was so panicked by the initial bad publicity that she immediately accepted a fat fee to pose for rival mag, *OK!* Since then the duchess has been ringing Eduardo almost every day, apologising for her denials and begging him to understand that she "had to do it".

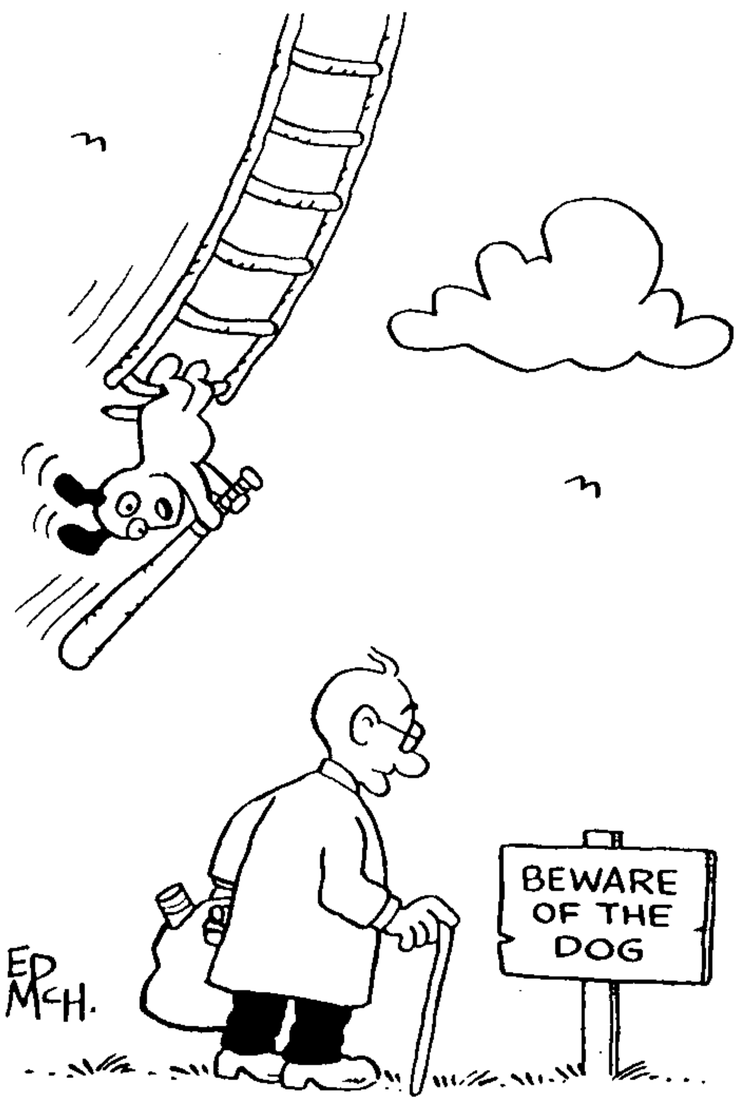
All this had absolutely nothing to do, of course, with the mag's last front cover: la Freebiana underwater in the Caribbean with, naturally, sharks.

CHARITY NEWS

THE National Trust has had its comeuppance after defiantly ignoring local anger in Old Colwyn, Wales, over its plans to sell off a 250-year-old farm for housing development (*Eyes passim*).

The trust insisted that Parciau Farm's late owner knew the land she left could be developed. But this did not assuage the residents' fury, particularly when they noted the trust's self-proclaimed "social responsibility: its duty to consider the interests of its neighbours, the communities it seeks to serve".

Now, to the locals' delight, the trust's planning application has been chucked out by Conwy county borough council.



HACKWATCH SPECIAL

BABY TALK

THE trial of Louise Woodward had all the ingredients to set any Fleet Street editor salivating — plucky British lass at the mercy of beastly foreigners. So what if she might have killed a baby in her care? Unlike the "racist" and "hysterical" American media, our newspapers displayed the qualities for which we are rightly famous, including...

CONSIDERED JUDGMENT

● "There will doubtless be ritual denunciations of the US legal system. It would be wise to pause for reflection before such condemnation," a *Times* editorial observed after the conviction. Whereupon, after the briefest of pauses, it offered this profound reflection: "The judge, Hiller Zobel, had a manner as eccentric as his surname."

● "If her trial hadn't been televised, there wouldn't now be a massive campaign for her... For make no mistake, the public has a much clearer perception of justice than the liberal elite." — The *Sun*'s Garry "Brainbox" Bushell, apparently forgetting that the jurors who convicted Woodward were, er, members of the public.

● "Every reader who called the *Mirror* about the case backed Louise. Wilma Cook, 33, of Peterborough, said: 'I know she's innocent. I just want to tell her not to give up fighting' ...Essex mum Sam Christie, 29, a former au pair in America, said: 'There is no way that girl is guilty. I felt sick when I heard the verdict.' Elizabeth Taylor, 64, of Ellesmere Port, South Wirral, sobbed: 'I've called Downing Street, I'm so upset'." — The *Mirror*.

● "We want you to call him [President Clinton] and demand he intercedes to ensure justice for the 19-year-old. Phone the White house now on 001 202 456 1414." — The *Mirror*, showing its understanding of the separation between executive and judiciary.

● "Whatever the final outcome, there can be no easy happy ending for anyone." — A flash of insight from Lynda Lee-Potter, *Daily Mail*.

CONSISTENCY

● "The prosecution, which had resisted the removal of the possibility of a manslaughter verdict, is thought unlikely to appeal if such a conviction were imposed. Gerard Leone, the lead prosecutor, said: 'We would be reasonable and listen to anything which is placed before us'." — Tunku Varadarajan, page 1, the *Times*, 3 November.

● "There is also the prosecution to consider. Gerard Leone, the prosecutor, has made it clear that he will appeal against any decision by the judge to alter the verdict." — Tunku Varadarajan, page 3, the *Times*, 3 November.

● "Claims that the guilty verdict shames the whole US judicial system are misplaced." — *Express* editorial, 1 November.

● "Judge must right a wrong that shames American law." — *Express* editorial, 2 November.

● "Who can say what went on in the Eappens' luxurious home the day Matthew died? None of us. Who could swear Louise was innocent of all involvement? We do not know." — Mary Riddell, the *Mirror*, 1 November.

● "She is innocent." — Mary Riddell, the *Mirror*, 1 November.

● "In the case of Louise Woodward and the Eappen family, we will probably never know the truth, although I am convinced of Woodward's innocence." — Letter to the *Telegraph* from Lady Annabel Goldsmith, using the brilliant logic she inherited from her late husband in his will.

A SENSE OF PROPORTION

● "LOUISE'S NIGHTMARE: PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 & 14." — *Mirror*, 1 November. The nightmare of Matthew Eappen's bereaved parents was, presumably, held over due to lack of space.

● "It was the day that shamed America. And the trial of Louise Woodward will continue to shame America every day until she is free." — *Mirror* editorial.

● "A terrifying future awaits Louise Woodward in tough maximum security prison," the *Mirror* revealed on 1 November. At the "hellish Framingham Correction Center", her fellow inmates would include — amazingly enough — "criminals".

LACK OF JINGOISM

● "She was found guilty because she was British." — Daniel Jeffreys, the *Mail* correspondent in New York, revealing how the jury reached its verdict.

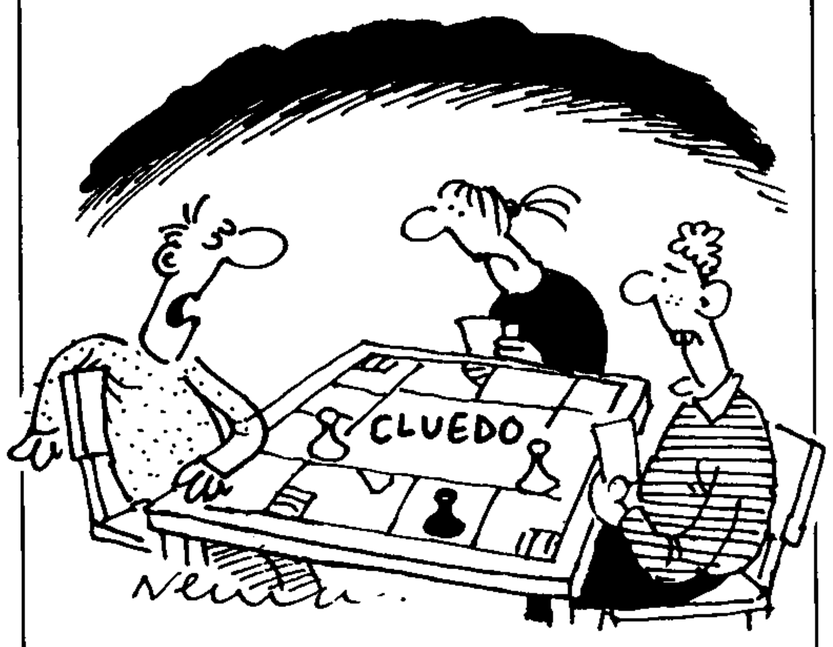
● "Coach operator Ron Richardson scrapped his purchase of a £40,000 American minibus in fury at the jailing of the teenager... Businessman Roy Fairclough, who runs a Manchester Airport transport service, banned Americans from his fleet of Jaguars and Rolls-Royces until the verdict is overturned." — The *Mirror*.

● "The time has come to demolish the American Bar Association Memorial at Runnymede: after the travesty of justice meted out to Louise Woodward, its presence there is a gross obscenity." — Letter from John Roberts of Dyfed, the *Guardian*.

● "The next time I hear an American talking about the need for human rights, I shall vomit. It is clear from the verdict on Louise Woodward that human rights are not an issue in certain states of America and I despair for any Americans or foreigners living there." — Letter from R. C. Whent of Southampton, *Daily Telegraph*.

● "Pub landlord Roger Barrie last night threw his stock of US booze in a skip because he is so incensed by Louise's jailing. He has also taken American-style burgers off the menu at the Coach and Horses pub in Edenfield, Lancs. Roger, 49, said: 'It's up to us Brits to show them how we feel'." — The *Sun*.

● "My family and I were booked to go on holiday to Boston in a fortnight. However, in light of the ghastly verdict, we have cancelled. I urge fellow-Brits to do the same." — Letter from N. Wardle of Hampshire, the *Sun*.



"I'll wait for the media to decide"

UNDERSTATEMENT

● "It seems as though the very souls of Sue and Gary Woodward have been overwhelmed by shock and grief, or as though the lifeblood has been suddenly drained from them... We must not forget that the Eappens have also suffered... But many will feel that the loss of a child nurtured and loved over 19 years is greater than the loss, though terrible, of one just eight months old." — *Express* editorial.

● "The sight of poor Louise Woodward buckling at the knees and crying for mercy as the verdict was announced early yesterday made grown men weep. I know. I was one of them." — *Sun* hack Bill Coles.

● "The *Sun* switchboard has been jammed with phone calls since Louise Woodward's guilty verdict was announced... Charity worker Linda Peacock, 50, from Rochester, New York, said: 'I want to apologise for my country. I don't want to live here any more, my heart is broken'... Librarian Shawn Monk, 32, of Boston, Massachusetts, said: 'My whole family feels deeply ashamed'." — The *Sun*.

● "If this statue means anything to America, Louise Woodward will today be given back her... LIBERTY," the *Mirror* declared on 4 November, over a front-page photo of the statue of liberty. Since she wasn't freed that day, *Mirror* readers were left to decide between two possible conclusions: that America had lost its liberty, or that *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan had lost his marbles.

PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

● "I was once an 18-year-old au pair..." — Mary Riddell, The *Mirror*.

● "The Louise Woodward case brought back harrowing memories for Sky presenter Vivien Creegor, who worked as an au pair in the US when she was 19." — The *Sun*.

● "My mother looks after my five-year-old daughter whilst I am at work..." — *Sun* women's editor Jane Moore.

● "I watched most of the au pair trial with my nanny..." — Emma Gilbey, *Daily Telegraph*.

● "I have worked since my sons were a few weeks old. I have been lucky enough to find minders who were kind and trustworthy. But I could not swear my children have always been happy or safe..." — Mary Riddell, The *Mirror*.

● "I was barely 18 when I left Durham station to travel to Dusseldorf to work as an au pair..." — Anne McElvoy, *Daily Telegraph*.

● "I also worked as an au pair..." — Claudia FitzHerbert, *Daily Telegraph*.

PRODUCT PROMOTION

● "Readers can make their own ribbon to support Louise. You will need about 8 inches (20 cm) which can be stitched into a loop. You can also display the Sun's Justice For Louise car sticker." — The *Sun*.

● "*Mirror* readers can support our campaign for Louise's release by sending for free lapel or car stickers. To get one of each, just send a stamped, addressed envelope to: Justice For Louise Woodward Campaign..." — The *Mirror*.

EXPERT OPINION

● "Celebrities backing the campaign included Merseyside-based Gladiator Warrior Mike Ahearne... In London, ex-gangster Frankie Fraser, who served 40 years in prison, said: 'I feel sure that Louise was innocent'... Nightclub owner Peter Stringfellow said: 'I'm appalled she's been found guilty'." — The *Mirror*.

● "I have only read reports of the trial and have not seen all the evidence myself but I can draw a firm conclusion..." — Dr Iain West, "world-renowned pathologist", in an exclusive interview with the *Mail on Sunday*.

● "Comedian Jimmy Tarbuck said he was concerned at the American jury's verdict." — The *Sun*.

● "Superstar Joan Collins flew in from Los Angeles yesterday sporting a yellow ribbon for Louise and stormed: 'The American jury system sucks'." — The *Sun*.

● "Lottery winner Mel Eddison 49 — who scooped £2.5 million — said: 'I'm proud to wear a ribbon. It's the jury who need locking up. We must now get behind the *Sun*'s campaign to put right this terrible wrong.' Jackie Green, 27, who won a £10.9 million jackpot, said: 'I really feel for Louise'." — The *Sun*.

● "Stars including David Baddiel and stunning Melinda Messenger last night backed the *Sun*'s campaign at the London launch of soccer boss Ruud Gullit's new clothing range. TV beauty Dani Behr said: 'The whole country should wear yellow ribbons'." — The *Sun*.

● "Have we all gone mad about Louise?" — Alice Thomson, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 November. (*Shome mishtake, shurely? — Ed.*)

JUST FANCY THAT!

'Nine votes to nil — he took the cash'

— Front page splash headline in the Guardian on 7 November, introducing massive coverage over most of page one and all of pages 12 and 13 of the privileges committee verdict on Neil Hamilton.

'Sleaze' inquiry ends in confusion

— Small headline over two-paragraph in brief piece in the *Daily Telegraph* on the same day.

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IN THE TEAROOM

THE time for the rebranding of "new" Labour has already arrived. Cabinet ministers previously advertised as "modern" and "competent" are now being widely discounted in advance of the coming reshuffle.

Take culture secretary Chris Smith, for example. He decides to take decisive action to call the squabbling prima donnas at the Royal Opera House to order. But where is the chorus of support from colleagues? Instead whispers are heard that, as with lottery fatcats and the millennium dome, Smith has over-reached himself; that he's a pisspoor performer and not a "safe pair of hands" after all. And who gets the plaudits for decorating the Canary Wharf summit? Is it the culture secretary who set up the creative industries taskforce in the first place? No. Oddly it is Peter Mandelson, who had nothing to do with it at all.

Now Smith is being dressed up as the enemy of tabloid interests — a dated style to adopt on today's slippery ministerial catwalk. All he does is make a few remarks about how nice it would be if victims of crimes weren't besieged by reporters and suddenly he's made out to be in favour of "draconian" press controls. Where were the spin doctors whose job on such occasions is to point out that at the very same event Smith restated his firm belief in self-regulation in the newspaper industry? They were as silent as the political grave. Maybe the culture secretary's promotions budget is all spent.

Elsewhere, poor David Clark has complained about how someone in the marketing department has been packaging him as a sleazoid ligger well past his sell-by date. Perhaps it was the same person who has been saying that the "mature" health secretary Frank Dobson is nearing the end of his product life-cycle and set to be replaced by young-at-heart 50-year-old Tessa Jowell?

You might have thought that if she ever really was first on the grid for promotion to the cabinet, the Formula One fiasco would have set her back. But no. The boys in customer relations argue that a willingness to accept a pathetic climbdown is not to be seen as an obstacle to high office, so long as the compromise is made in accordance with the prime minister's business plan. And what is his business plan? To keep big business sweet, of course.

'Urquhart'

CHANCELLOR Gordon Brown's king of spin Charlie Whelan has been having some bad luck.

He recently had a bust-up with *Panorama* over a report on the NHS. He claims the producers promised Dobson would have the final word. When he saw the minister's final words were intercut with other health professionals' views he went ballistic. He phoned *Panorama* and yelled a stream of obscenities at the startled producer, telling him he had lost the department of health's cooperation. Unluckily for him he was being taped and his complaint to the BBC about the programme has now been matched with a complaint from the *Panorama* team about his telephone manner.

STUDENTS of linguistics were fascinated by Labour minister John Denham's announcement that he had no intention of taking the wind chill factor into account when determining cold weather payments.

After 18 years of attacking the cruel Tories' treatment of shivering pensioners with hypothermia, the policy announced by Denham — once a hardline spokesman for Old Labour's "Clause Four" group — thoughtfully described "wind chill" as "wind speed".

PITY the mild-mannered Labour new boy from Worcester, Mike Foster, who took his party's manifesto commitment on fox hunting seriously enough to draw up his own bill to hasten a ban.

While the party's animal welfare spokesman Elliot Morley told anyone who'd listen that the government would allow time for the bill's passage, when the line changed "Boy" Foster was only allowed out into the television studios to deliver the line that the government had never made such a promise and that his bill was really designed to demonstrate the strength of feeling among MPs — since it now hasn't a chance of making it on to the statute book.

With furious MPs gathering around Foster to offer support and condolences, a photo shoot was hastily arranged on College Green. As MPs from all parties gathered, a small figure pushed herself forward to be at the "Boy's" side in his time of need, while coincidentally ensuring that she was at the centre of the photograph. It was none other than luscious Lorna Fitzsimmons, the Commons' very own highly-sexed love machine, whose interest in hunting has hitherto been confined to foxes with two legs. The "Boy" will need to watch himself.

BECKENHAM Tories' replacement for disgraced MP Piers Merchant is Jacqui Lait, who until May represented the voters of Hastings and Rye, and comes to Beckenham "with their blessing and support".

Er, the "blessing and support" comes only months after the voters spectacularly kicked her out of office. In 1992 the Hastings Labour candidate came a miserable third polling 10,000 fewer votes than the second-placed candidate. In May Labour's Michael Foster achieved a massive 18.5 per cent swing and Lait was left with only 600 more votes than the third placed Lib Dem.

PS: Lait was PPS to Welsh secretary (now party leader) William Hague between 1995-6.

A RECENT "welfare to work" conference organised by Southwark chamber of commerce and held at the Imperial War Museum, received the enthusiastic backing of "new" Labour in the guise of Harriet Harman, Tessa Jowell and Geoffrey Robinson.

Sharing the stage with Harman was one Richard Kalmar, chair of Southwark Chamber of Commerce and of Southwark Business Partnership. Harman, who has taken a strong line against those who commit domestic violence, will doubtless be surprised to learn that Kalmar's common-law wife for the last 16 years, Morag Bocker, has been granted a court order preventing Kalmar from committing acts of domestic violence.

Kalmar was not in court when Bocker was granted the order: he was otherwise engaged... at the Imperial War Museum.

LEST I FORGET

ELECTIONEERING is hotting up in Winchester as Tory candidate Gerald Malone paints himself as the perfect constituency MP as he tries to win back his old seat in the forthcoming by-election.

He must defeat Liberal Democrat Mark Oaten, who saw his victory by two votes on 1 May overturned in the high court. Malone recently branded Oaten as "very much a Watford man". This was a bit rich for those constituents who recall visiting Malone's house last year when he was still the local MP. Nobody was in and there were cobwebs hanging across the doorway.

Meanwhile "Swampy" Malone continues to promote himself as an environmentalist opposing the building of a new town at Micheldever Station. Back in 1992 David Croker, Tory leader for Winchester city council, appealed to the European court of human rights for an environmental review of the M3. He was roundly condemned for his efforts by Malone in his maiden speech to the Commons.

Malone's green past also includes close link with the, er, oil industry. In *DOD's* 1986 guide Malone listed the industry among his special interests, and until he was made minister for health in 1994 he was a parliamentary consultant to Texaco. So, having worked for an oil company and condemned local road protesters, the Hampshire environment is clearly safe in his hands.

THE government's local enterprise development unit (LEDU) in Belfast has just published its glossy annual report for 1996-7 in which, tucked away on page 41, is hard evidence the local market economy is working — among the unit's 213 staff, anyway.

"During the year," states a humble accounting note, "a loss amounting to £118,295 arising from an employee theft was identified. Prosecution is proceeding..." This is news to the Royal Ulster Constabulary's fraud squad, which has certainly taken an interest in the allegedly missing money but has yet to charge anyone.

DESPITE Welsh secretary Ron Davies's promise that members of the new Welsh assembly would be quality candidates chosen on merit from a range of backgrounds, the reality is that Welsh MPs who face a lacklustre future in Westminster are considering swopping the bright lights of London for the dimmer but more comfortable lights of Cardiff.

First on to the gravy train was Rhodri Morgan MP, passed over for Welsh under secretary after the last election, who declared an interest in shifting to the Welsh assembly while keeping his seat at Westminster until the next general election. No wonder he was so keen on a yes vote.

Plaid Cymru's promise of quality candidates appears to be going down the same road. A couple of Plaid MPs have expressed interest in standing for the assembly, and the venerable Welsh nationalist lord (a Welsh oxymoron), Dafydd Elis Thomas, has recently staked a claim and started to look for a house in Meirionydd.

WE WILL JOIN THE EURO WHEN THE BRITISH ECONOMY CONVERGES WITH THOSE OF EUROPE!
...IN STAGNATION!
...OVER MANNING!...
AND MASSIVE UNEMPLOYMENT!
HOW SOON CAN YOU DELIVER?

ENERGY minister John Battle's hand-wringing performance in the Commons has landed him in hot water with mining MPs from all parties.

The country's biggest private coal company, Richard Budge's RJB Mining, is threatening to shut half Britain's remaining mines if the government fails to honour its election pledge to halt the construction of gas-fired power stations and if the electricity generators push ahead with contracts to import subsidised coal from the continent.

Budge, who inherited British Coal's assets at a knockdown price, is under pressure from the City to divest himself of at least 10 mines in Labour-held constituencies in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. But it will not have escaped the man who has made plenty of brass from muck that he can start firing staff with impunity in the new year when enhanced redundancy payments no longer have to be paid to former employees of the old British Coal.

Budge has already announced the closure of the Asfordy super mine in Leicestershire, built with £9m of taxpayers' money. The minister, John Battle, even managed to shock Tory MPs by his Damascene conversion to a glorious free-market future for Britain's miners, while one Labour MP described his performance as "toe curlingly embarrassing".

THE humiliated Welsh office has climbed down on efforts to screen the palatial mansion frequently used by Prince Charles and Mrs Parker Bowles as a weekend rendezvous (see last *Eye*).

After locals from the village of Felinfach rebelled, work has been abandoned on the 6ft high fence, leaving it half completed. The Welsh office will now consider other options to shield Major Nic Paravacini's home, Glyn Celyn, near Brecon. But the £30,000 set aside for the fence has already been spent.

'Backbiter'

IT WAS pleasing to see Paul McCartney sticking the knife into Oasis.

The grandpappy of rock'n'roll told the brothers dim, that their eggs are bigger than their talent

Glasgow Evening Times

ENVIRON-MENTAL

THE Royal Society-Esso Energy Award has been awarded to Magnox Electric which claims to have saved "13 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum".

Strange that Esso should find this so commendable when it doesn't apparently believe in climate change. In October Lee Raymond, the chairman and chief executive of Exxon Corporation, owner of Esso, said: "The case for so-called global warming is far from air tight."

Still, even odder is the fact that Magnox Electric has saved the carbon dioxide by keeping its ancient nuclear reactors going — despite cracking welds and embrittled reactor containment vessels — well beyond their 25-year life. The alternative, it is argued, would be to produce electricity from nasty carbon dioxide-burning fossil fuels (a bit like the main product of, er, Esso).

Meanwhile Magnox is proving its green credentials by creating big piles of reprocessing waste at Sellafield. And no fewer than 15 governments have expressed urgent concern at the build-up of Magnox reprocessing discharges in lobsters in the Irish Sea.

WATER LIBERTY

THAMES Water is splashing out yet more on expensive newspaper advertisements to tell customers how clever it is. Most recently Londoners could read about a huge underground reservoir beneath Enfield which acted as a natural sponge for their water.

Oddly, Thames water has not advertised some of its other activities; in particular that it is currently fighting residents of Campden Hill, on the borders of Kensington and Notting Hill, to convert just such an underground reservoir and former depot into... one of the most expensive new housing developments in London.

NOOKS and CORNERS

INVITATIONS have gone out to the launch of English Heritage's annual report later this month and, somewhat to the surprise of many recipients, Sir Jocelyn Stevens has chosen to hold this glittering occasion in the modish and sparkling brand-new surroundings of No1 Poultry, so recently unwrapped in the heart of City of London.

Possibly the chairman of English Heritage is entering into the spirit of Tony Blair's New Britain by using this exciting new monument of British architecture, thereby showing that the quango to which his name adds such lustre has nothing to do with tradition and the stuffy past and is all about the dynamic future of our society. Possibly not. But if he had to use a new building to launch a report about protecting the best buildings of the past, the chairman might have been more tactful and chosen one which does not represent a betrayal of all that English Heritage once stood for — and an insult to many who are invited to the occasion.

For No1 Poultry is, of course, the controversial 1980s office building next to the Mansion House ostensibly designed by the late Sir James Stirling for Lord Palumbo which replaced eight listed Victorian commercial buildings, and these constituted a rare and remarkable ensemble of an historical importance beyond the quality of its constituent parts.

My Lord Palumbo only achieved their destruction and the fulfilment of his own monumental vanity after two hard fought public inquiries in 1984 and 1988 *(Eyes passim ad magnam nauseam)*. Those public inquiries were English Heritage's finest hour. Regardless of the petulant and self-interested hostility of the RIBA and the Modern architectural establishment, and of the immense financial (and political) power wielded (then) by the plutocratic heir to Rudolph Palumbo, the officials of English Heritage prepared a powerfully coherent and well-researched defence of the listed buildings (which was their job and their duty, after all). And they won. Twice. First against the antediluvian scheme to create Mansion House Square with a glass skyscraper designed from the grave by Mies van der Rohe (which required the demolition of even more listed buildings), and then against the scheme to replace the group of buildings between Poultry and Queen Victoria Street by a sort of Post-Modern block by Stirling.

These were Famous Victories. And in each case the victory was promptly betrayed by the then secretary of state for the environment under Mrs Thatcher. In the first case, the unimpeachable conclusion by the inspector was undermined by Patrick Jenkin who, while accepting the decision, encouraged Palumbo to return with another scheme; and in the second by Nicholas Ridley, who argued that — in this case — the quality of the Stirling building outweighed the case for the retention of the listed buildings — thus undermining the whole system for protecting historic buildings and, despite feeble protestations to the contrary, setting a disastrous precedent.

The generous donations made by Lord Palumbo's property company to the Conservative party were certainly not sacrifices made in vain. And so, after SAVE Britain's Heritage took the case to the House of Lords, and despite the fact that Palumbo then had to be baled out by the German developer Dieter Bock, the Mappin & Webb building, that distinctive corner landmark by Belcher, together with the other listed buildings, came down.

English Heritage had fought for them tenaciously and with honour. So, for the chairman of English Heritage to use their recently completed replacement is a public statement which can only be interpreted as approval of what transpired. So why is Ol' Piranha Teeth doing this?

Perhaps he feels the past is a closed chapter, the battle was lost and that it is time to look forward. Possibly.

Perhaps Sir Jocelyn simply did not know about the public inquiries of the 1980s; after all, he was somewhere else then and all those most involved in them have since moved on — a sad comment in itself on what has happened to English Heritage.

Perhaps Sir Jocelyn really is a fervent admirer of this late, last "masterpiece" by Big Jim? I do not know. But what I do know is that his decision has rightly caused dismay, outrage and disgust.

What next? Perhaps Sir Jocelyn should now book the Greenwich Dome for the launch of English Heritage's annual report for the year 2000? On second thoughts, however, perhaps he need not bother yet: it is difficult to see what else is going on in it, after all.

'Piloti'

OPERA NEWS

WHILE opera lovers worry about heritage secretary Chris Smith's plan to merge the Royal Opera House and English National Opera under one roof by the year 2000, ROH staff wonder if they can survive the week.

They fear that raiding the ROH Floral Trust reserve fund to stave off bankruptcy will have knock-on effects on ticket subsidies. Current ticket sales at the house's temporary homes, the Labatt's Apollo and the Shaftesbury, have been going very badly — not helped by severe cutbacks in the marketing budget.

At the latest fraught staff meeting chief executive Mary Allen (best known as Opera House chairman Lord Chadlington's pal from the Arts Council) explained that financial procedures had to change. How? From now on, she explained, whenever there is a major artistic decision to be made we must examine the financial consequences. Amazed employees could only wonder how decisions had been arrived at before — with complete disregard for money?

New finance director Richard Hall also came under fire. He was asked when the ROH's increasingly irate freelancers and suppliers would be paid. Some have not received a penny for three months. Hall declared that he hadn't realised there was a problem, at which he was lambasted from all sides by staff who had informed Hall of the debts and had been told he was looking into the problem.

Meanwhile any hope of a friendly relationship with the Commons culture committee has collapsed after Lord Chadlington, aka Peter Selwyn Gummer, tried to make a statement on his former chief executive Genista McIntosh's sudden departure.

McIntosh left her post after only four months because of "ill-health". She has now said that she would have held on but that she was asked (naming no names) to leave immediately. Lord Chadlington has always insisted that he had tried to keep her there. At the end of the select committee hearing he asked if he could make a final statement on the Genista matter.

Committee chairman Gerald Kaufman smiled his snakiest smile and said no he couldn't. Onlookers report that Chadlington went rigid with rage. The start of a beautiful working relationship? Watch this space.

"Have you let the cat watch Tom and Jerry again"

TV

Prison Weekly (BBC2)

Abigail's Party (BBC2)

Jaws (BBC2)

Panorama (BBC1)

WHEN the BBC promised last year — in a statement on "balance" — that both sides of every issue would be presented, there were a number of sarky remarks in the press about the prospect of a programme for lags called *Crime UK* to balance out *Crimewatch UK* and all the other nark shows.

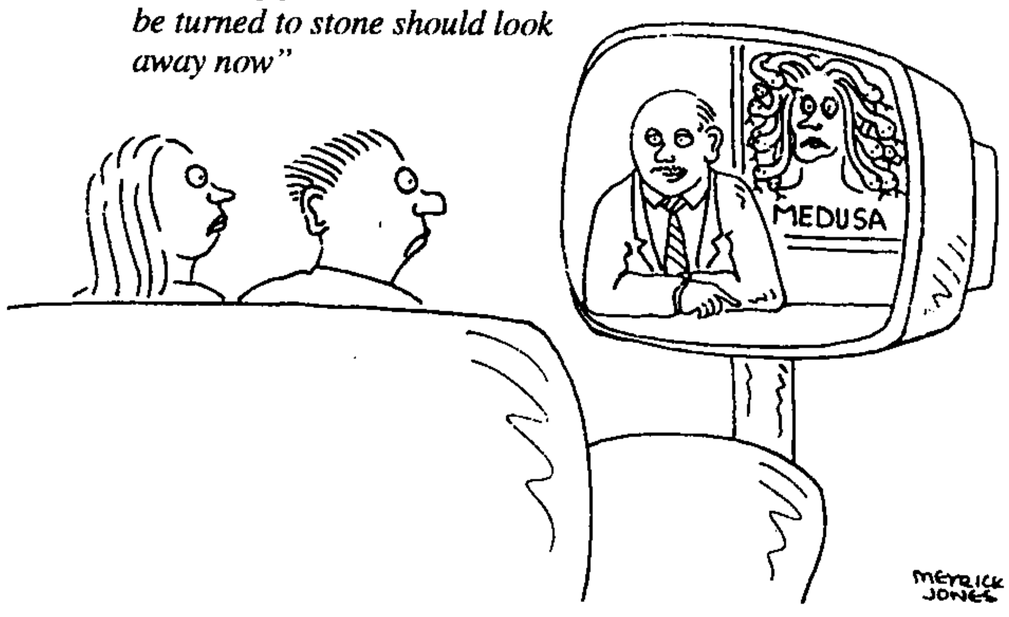
Never make a joke around a commissioning editor. *Prison Weekly* — a show hosted from a different British clink each week — has just begun on BBC2. This makes history as the first ever television series in which the presenters don't need a taxi home afterwards.

There's a famous story about a notoriously insensitive BBC producer charged with creating a similarly liberal-minded project in which the unemployed hosted a show about the problems of joblessness. After one participant had fluffed their way through a link, the producer snapped: "Don't give up the day job, eh?" With similar brutality, it has to be said that the hosts of *Prison Weekly* are more likely to take Jon Snow's wallet than his job.

Inevitably the series' biggest problem is location reports. The film crew can't be expected to hang around while the presenter applies for a judicial review, so the warders and governors get to do these bits. The first edition did contain some original and interesting information. Apparently, for example, in-mates on Britain's first prison ship bitch over who's got the sea views. The most wretched insight was the terrible physical and mental effect on inmates of any female visitors. In the context, the revelation in the credits that the two directors were both women seemed about as tactful as the "day job" remark. Equally unfortunate was the fact that — although this is probably the ultimate example of niche-programming — BBC2 has scheduled it for 11.15pm, long after banging-up time.

Square Eyes recently complained here about the phenomenon of the "disguised repeat": those shows in which celebs select their favourite bit from *Birds Of A Feather* or Ronnie Corbett chooses his all-time comedy classic moments. Although such series are 95 percent retread material, the shows cunningly count in the annual lists of "new programming" as against the column of "repeats", which the BBC has pledged to reduce.

"Those of you who don't want to be turned to stone should look away now"



Now, BBC2 is trying an equally sneaky trick. Two weekends back, the channel screened Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party* for the umpteenth time. Throughout the week, there were related spin-off shows, culminating in a special about Alison Steadman, the drama's star.

Last weekend, BBC2 screened *Jaws* yet again. Presumably to mark a key anniversary of the movie's release — the 22nd! — the schedule carried on as if an unseen Orson Welles film was about to be given its world premiere. Throughout the week, celebs recalled their favourite moment from the film. On the night of transmission, *Jaws* — available on video in most branches of Woolworths for around £4.99 — was preceded by a 50-minute doc about its making and followed by a half-hour piece about sea monsters in fact and fiction.

The problem with this approach is that — far from disguising the repeats — it rather draws attention to them. The viewer begins to fear that *Prison Weekly* is simply an excuse for showing every episode of *Porridge* again.

Martin Bashir, who became famous for being the receptacle into which the late Diana spilled her beans but has scarcely been seen on screen since, was allowed out last week to report on a surrogate baby tug-of-love case. The central couple involved were frustrated luvvies who were given every opportunity to act out their ambitions. At one point the husband — conveniently filmed taking a call from the surrogacy agency on speaker phone — angrily terminated the call and shouted "Bitch!" at the telephone.

This was an absolutely brilliant edition of *Modern Times*. Regrettably, it was transmitted in the *Panorama* strand. The tabloidisation of the current affairs flagship — another of Square Eyes' rants *passim* — goes on. It would be a brave viewer these days who volunteered to pick one of the BBC's documentaries out of an identity parade.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

MORE tales from the Kafkaesque world of BBC Resources. Bonking Rod Lynch, its head, threw a party last month at Bush House to "introduce and promote" his studios there to World Service producers — who have been using the studios for 50 years.

A guest list covered four A4 pages, Rod gathered together a fine collection of clarets and canapés, and a photographer from in-house magazine *Ariel* was summoned. Alas! A grand total of, er, one producer turned up, a hapless fellow from the French service.

Undaunted Rod began to deliver the long speech he had prepared — only to junk it halfway through. The photographer from *Ariel* was then evicted. What happened to all the food and drink is not known.

What is known, however, is how much BBC Resources now charges to change a lightbulb. At the White City building conventional light switches have been done away with. Instead, movement sensors detect when a "space" has become empty (or its occupants have fallen asleep or died) and the lights go out on their own.

This can be inconvenient for hacks doing a TV interview in the corner of a quiet office somewhere. But help is now at hand: Resources will send someone out to switch the lights on *permanently* for £30. Oh, and it'll cost another £30 to have them switched back off again.

Meanwhile hacks remain appalled by the cost of copying material from tape to tape within the BBC — currently £90 per half hour — and routinely send tapes for dubbing at cheaper independent production houses. Even after the cost of couriers and cabs, it is cheaper to ignore the internal market and go out-of-house.

Why are the Beeb's own facilities so expensive? Well, BBC Resources is obliged to add extra overheads of 17 percent to the cost of using dubbing suites and other services. The extra sum covers expenditure on things like, er, couriers and cabs.

TWO days before Brenda arrived at Broadcasting House to open the ludicrously-named BBC Experience (more widely known as the Birt Sanctuary), there was a full-scale dress rehearsal where minions were put through their paces in front of BBC chairman Christopher "Pigling" Bland and John Birt himself.

One section of the exhibition is a mock-up of a radio drama studio where punters can act out and record a short piece of theatre. It includes the essential ingredients of most radio drama — door bells, coconut shells for horses' hooves, etc. There is also a tray full of gravel and a couple of heavy old boots, so would-be studio managers can make the sound of footsteps.

Birt immediately made a beeline for these toys, volunteering as the sound effects man. And when the script called for footsteps, he began waving the boots in the air. Nothing happened. "These boots don't work, and the queen's coming in two days!" he yelled at the assembled staff. "Get them fixed!"

After a few moments of embarrassed silence, a minor functionary plucked up the courage to tell the Dear Leader that, to make a noise, the boots had to be crunched in the gravel.

Plugged In

It [the Louise Woodward trial] was compulsive viewing — and Sky News more than anyone should be commended for their comprehensive coverage.

GARRY BUSHELL
The Sun

Poor old Tromso, who had Johnny Hansen sent off harshly after 54 minutes, could at least tune in to the weather in Norwegian on Live TV last night before their flight home this morning. And, yes, it was snowing in Tromso.

MIKE WALTERS
Mirror Sport

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

INDEPENDENT producers have been invited by BBC TV to come up with ideas for fly-on-the-wall documentaries about the Millennium Board and its wretched dome — but it seems unlikely any will be accepted.

Having seen what happened when the Royal Opera House allowed a TV crew inside its portals, senior BBC executives have decided the whole project is too risky to be entrusted to an independent. Far safer to have the programmes made in-house, where it can be closely supervised. The inevitable outcome will be a wholly "sympathetic" and "reliable" pufferama, glorifying millennium minister Peter Mandelson and "new" Labour architect Lord Rogers, who designed the dome.

It is of course mere coincidence that Lord Rogers's best friend is BBC TV boss Alan Yentob — and that Mandelson was, until recently, a special adviser to his equally dear friend John Birt.

BBC producer John King has a legendary ability to push through deals to the benefit of his own bank balance. But his latest — involving 100 editions of *Going For a Song*, presented by Michael Parkinson and now being taped at BBC Pebble Mill in Birmingham — appears to have collapsed.

Having persuaded his bosses that he "owned" the rights to the show, King was due to collect £25,000 in "format fees" — ie £250 per programme, which was the rate he received for the previous two series. But BBC lawyers and copyright specialists have now frozen the payment on the grounds that *Going For a Song* may have belonged to the BBC all along. Although King did work on the original *Going For a Song* with Arthur Negus in the 1960s, his claim to have "devised" the show is disproved by a glance at the old scripts where he is clearly listed as "production assistant".

Then, of course, there is the *Telly Addicts* saga, a programme which began as *Telly Quiz* about 15 years ago, the idea of stalwart BBC producer Bill Jones. After one series the job of producing it was passed to King, who started claiming ownership soon afterwards. In 1991 he sold it on to Noel Edmonds for a bargain price of £9,000, since when the bearded wonder has collected large royalties whenever the *Telly Addicts* format is bought by foreign TV stations — money which would otherwise have gone to the BBC.

Wheeler-dealing aside, King's career is remarkable for its mediocrity. In the 1980s he was responsible for the disastrous *Saturday Night Affairs*, in which a group of celebs got pissed in a studio and babbled inanely without a host to discipline them. It was cancelled after the second transmission at a cost of £250,000. Then there was the legendary floperoo *A Year in Provence*, for which he was co-executive producer. Cost: £1,080,000. Buried in the vaults is an even bigger fiasco, *Treasure Islands*, for which Jim Davidson and a cast of competitors flew to the Great Barrier Reef for a gameshow too dire and incomprehensible for transmission. Cost: £500,000.

NOVEMBER is a key "sweeps" period in the United States for TV stations to set advertising rates based on the ratings of their "best" shows. Rupert Murdoch's Fox network is no exception, and has prepared a batch of "reality" specials which will inevitably cross the Atlantic to BSkyB early next year.

These follow the success of earlier real-life shows such as the not-very David Attenboroughy *When Animals Attack*, which features amateur video footage of humans being killed by animals — including an elephant trainer being crushed to death in a Hawaiian zoo, and a tourist in a Canadian wildlife park being fatally trampled by a runaway moose.

Building on the show's high ratings, Fox now presents *The World's Deadliest Swarms* which, to quote the handout, features "masses of terrifying creatures, including piranhas, locusts, mice and bees" attacking humans.

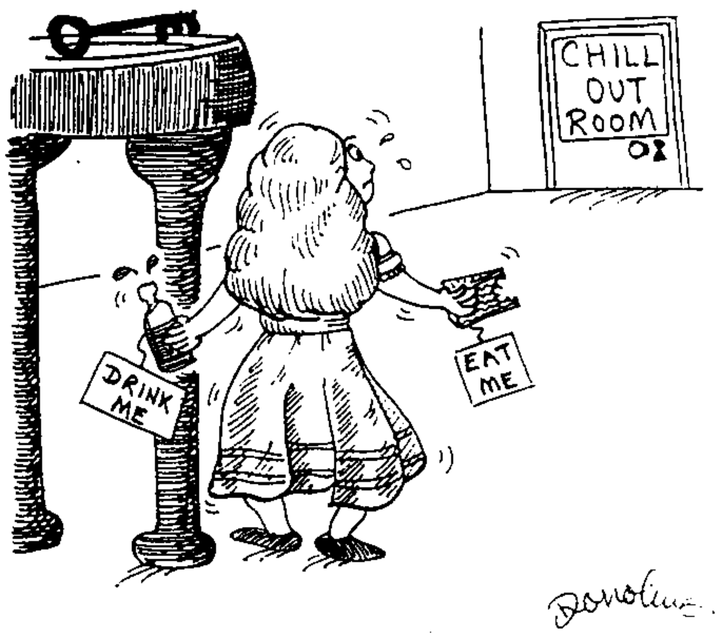
Video Justice — Crime Caught on Tape includes security camera footage of sex offenders, muggers and — scoop! — a real life pyromaniac, all "caught in the act"; while *Cheating Death — Catastrophes Caught on Tape* and *The World's Scariest Police Chases* are also scheduled despite complaints from competitors that Fox is destroying American television.

Alas the discriminating Fox audience will have to do without *Prisoners Out Of Control* which had been scheduled for 20 November. Billed as including "never before seen video of the horrors that can happen behind prison walls" this turned out to mean tapes sold by private prison companies showing their inmates being murdered, gang raped and stabbed. Legal considerations have led to the programme being dropped pending reediting — although there's nothing to prevent it being shown here on Sky, apart from Elisabeth Murdoch's innate good taste of course.

CHRIS EVANS's desire — announced from the stage of an awards ceremony — to patch things up with the BBC's Matthew Bannister may owe something to the imminent change of ownership at Virgin Radio.

Unless the monopolies and mergers commission (MMC) intervenes, Richard Branson will soon offload his station to Capital Radio. The management there may well be less tolerant of Evans's "anarchic" approach to broadcasting (ie talking about himself all the time), not least because its own breakfast DJ Chris Tarrant hammers Evans in the ratings morning after morning.

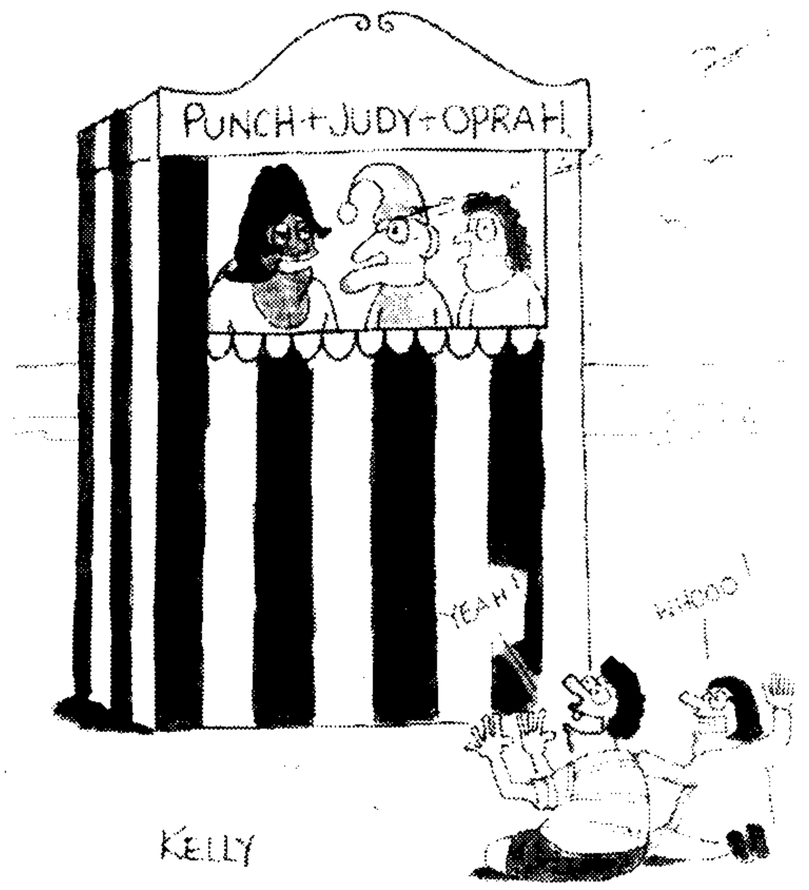
Evans is also facing a new and not necessarily benevolent regime at Channel 4, so sucking up to Bannister could help preserve a longterm escape route to the BBC should life in the commercial sector prove too trying.



DAVID HARE, best known for his "state of the nation" plays, might find inspiration for his next masterpiece in the appalling exploitation of workers in the British garment industry.

A recent investigation of east London sweatshops by *The Money Programme* found that most of their clothes are made for cheapo chain-stores; but the name of top designer Nicole Farhi was also mentioned several times. One firm was paid £45 for making a Farhi coat — which was then sold in West End stores for £490.

When not earning a fortune in the rag trade, Nicole Farhi relaxes at home with her husband — concerned, liberal playwright David Hare.



DIANABALLS

THE Franklin Mint, purveyor of sad but expensive memorabilia, was anxious not to be seen cashing in on the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. So it waited a full six weeks after her death before selling the new 16-inch Diana "porcelain portrait doll".

The figurine, which at $195 is a snip compared to its $495 deluxe Marilyn Monroe doll, features one of Diana's dresses which, farsightedly, the Mint bought at auction earlier this year. The new doll is thus "the only authentic replica of the stunning designer gown with bolero jacket".

"We were very concerned about not commercializing her," said a spokeswoman for the Mint, which is estimated to have sales of $600m a year. It will give $1.5m to Diana charities from the sale of the Diana doll, a Diana plate and a Diana tiara ring.

IMPORTANT delegates to a recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) conference in Paris were surprised after the usual sumptuous dinner to be offered "a late night trip down the ride of death".

This exciting ride started at the Ritz, glided past the Eiffel tower and, with the official cars gathering speed, swept through the fatal underpass where Diana, the Princess of Wales and Dodi Fayed died.

When one guest suggested the "ride of death" was not in the best taste, the driver-host retorted: "Nonsense! We do this all the time — especially with the British. It's part of the package."

PIZZA EXCESS

TETCHY right-wing columnist Paul Johnson would have been proud of his son Luke's defence of Pizza Express at the firm's annual general meeting on 7 November.

Chairman Luke was answering whingeing shareholders who had read the recent report on Pizza Express by PIRC, the corporate governance watchdog, which wondered why the firm's remuneration committee has been stuffed full of the directors it remunerates, and why a newly-appointed director, Paul Gilligan, had not even been put up for election (and had to stand down).

Shareholders also wanted to know why the only non-executive director was related to the firm's founder, and above all why directors had been selling off so many of their shares. Cool Hand Luke had an answer for everything.

"It is very difficult to find non-executives who know this business," he explained. PIRC was "obsessed with rules". On the other hand, "capitalism is the wild west".

This probably explains his own smash and grab raid. In May he sold 200,000 shares and in September another 100,000 (the current share price is £7.76). As any wild west bandit knows, what goes out must quickly be replaced. So Luke has been given another 500,000 share options which he can buy at £4.18 and sell at a profit (at least) of £3 each.

DOING THE ROUNDS

Bristol and beyond

THE General Medical Council's (GMC) "disciplinary case of the decade" involving two former paediatric cardiac surgeons at the United Bristol Hospital Trust is not only timely (occurring just five and a half years after the *Eye* exposed the poor mortality rates: see *Eyes* 793, 797, 804, 807) but hints of a far more widespread problem in the accountability of surgeons.

Mr James Wisheart, the senior surgeon in charge, built the Bristol unit up from scratch and worked round the clock to maintain it. He trained in an era where the surgeon's best was good enough and his level of commitment, popularity and seniority was such that it was extremely difficult for other clinicians to question his surgical performance. Had he been an arrogant, pompous git, the trust may have found it easier to tackle the dilemma. But as the well liked and respected medical director, his competence was beyond doubt.

Neither is the GMC questioning the surgeons' clinical competence. In March, Mr Wisheart was described as "a higher risk surgeon" by an independent review commissioned by then health secretary Stephen Dorrell — but there are no specific guidelines as to how risky a surgeon has to be before he has to stop operating. The GMC's charge against Wisheart is that, in gaining the informed consent of parents to operate on their children, he quoted national average survival rates rather than his own, far worse, mortality rates. Since patients have no legal obligation to know an individual surgeon's operating record, the case hinges on whether Wisheart acted ethically in his selective disclosure of information.

The Bristol case has lead to calls that all surgeons should be obliged to audit and publish the outcomes of their surgery. Appropriate action also needs to be taken to correct shortcomings — either retraining or a tactical withdrawal from certain operations. Specialties such as cardiac surgery are intensely demanding, requiring enormous stamina, concentration and excellent hand-eye coordination — all of which tail off with age. And yet, even if a senior surgeon recognises and accepts his limitations, there are few opportunities in the NHS for an honourable exit.

Trainee surgeons present another problem: 70 percent of the operations they do are unsupervised, even when trying out procedures for the first time. There is plenty of evidence to suggest this may not always be a good thing (eg, a study last year in the *Journal of Bone Medicine* found that hip replacements carried out by trainees were 11 times as likely to need revision than those done by consultants); but such poor results are generally accepted as a fact of life in the NHS.

The Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) has tried to tackle this problem promising surgeons anonymity if they collect and divulge the outcomes of their operations. For example, last year it published a detailed national audit of prostate surgery which clearly shows that surgeon number 169 has six times the average mortality rate. As no surgeon will admit to being 169, the public has to trust that the RCS and GMC have acted swiftly to sort the situation out. Alas the Bristol case shows that surgeons accused of incompetence can continue operating for many years before they're asked to stop.

I don't think I can cope with a twelve month wait for my operation – Do you think I should go 'Private'?
How does one day next week grab you?
NHS Consultant
Private Consultant
HUNTER

THE LACK of influence of the RCS is further illustrated by a report from its steering group published in June 1996, which recommended that children requiring cleft lip and palate surgery be operated on only in specialist centres where operators do a minimum of 30 new cases a year. At present many operations are done in "low volume centres" by non-specialists, with consequently poor long-term cosmetic results.

Indeed, an audit of results in the north-west of England found that 48 percent of children require major and often multiple reconstructive surgery because their initial operation has been done badly by a non-specialist dabbler. Compelling evidence for a change in practice — and yet many hospitals are completely ignoring the RCS guidelines and continuing to allow non-specialists to operate on the cheap. Prof Brian Summerlad, a specialist plastic surgeon, believes it's "up to parents to agitate" to insist their child is seen by a specialist, but amid the fear and confusion of coming to terms with your child's facial deformity, this very rarely happens.

The scandal is compounded by the petty professional jealousy between some plastic surgeons and maxillo-facial surgeons which can only be against the patients' interests. In the absence of action by the department of health, MD suggests the following hospitals might like to question whether they should provide such specialist surgery: Exeter, City Hospital Birmingham, Stoke, Wexham Park, Falkirk, Wrexham, Shotley Bridge Co. Durham, Carlisle and the Royal Surrey in Guildford.

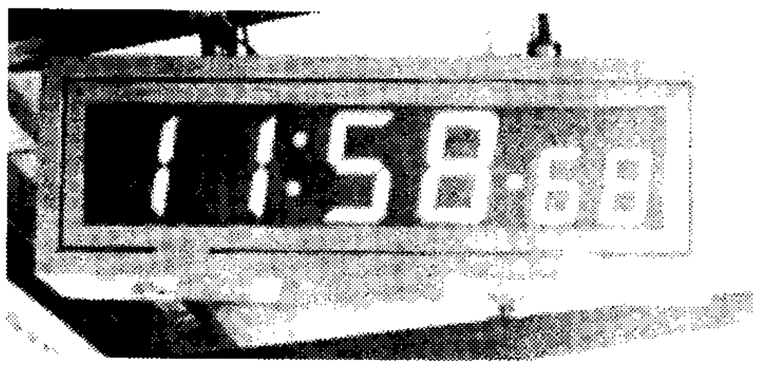
M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Opraf

ONE of the most useful achievements of the strategic rail authority planned by the government should be to bring objectivity to the policing of rail franchises, a task currently left to the office of passenger rail franchising, Opraf.

Opraf, having selected the franchisees and publicly praised them for offering such good deals for passengers and taxpayers, is none too eager to admit that many are underperforming. Indeed, franchising director John O'Brien, an awfully nice chartered accountant who previously worked for Granada, London Christian Radio and the Spastics Society, regards the 25 franchises as a doting grandfather deals with his grandchildren: he's quick to dish out sweets but extremely reluctant to smack bottoms.



Railtrack's revolutionary new clock (Bristol Parkway Station). *Photo by Glenn Hall.*

Regional Railways North East was one franchise that simply had to be smacked, however, when it cancelled nearly 4,000 trains over six months this year because it had got rid of too many drivers. It was fined £100,000. But never fear: it was soon awarded a £500,000 bonus for... good performance.

O'Brien also pretended to be angry in February when South West Trains was cancelling services for the same reason. He then awarded SWT so many good-performance bonuses it has made a net gain this year of £395,000.

Dishing out a total of more than £12m in nine months to reward good performance is unnecessary and an irresponsible use of public money. Good performance is *expected* from operators and usually generates its own bonuses in terms of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Instead, all of the 19 non-InterCity franchises bar MerseyRail and Island Line have been rewarded more than they have been penalised. ScotRail has made £3.6m this year. Even Connex SouthCentral, which cancelled trains in bulk this summer, has made a net gain of £342,400 after deducting penalties from bonuses.

O'Brien also allowed Connex SouthCentral to avoid paying compensation under the passenger's charter by removing the cancelled trains (nearly 20 percent of services) from the statistics, which are now based instead on Connex's emergency timetable. (Any train operator is therefore now entitled to institute an "emergency timetable" when it hits a spot of bother, neatly sidestepping the compensation bill.) He is also willing for Connex to offer its pissed-off customers three days' free travel by way of compensation — assuming they will want to return after their experiences. Under the charter rules, Connex was probably facing compensation claims of more than £2m; the free travel offer is likely to cost far less — £300,000 is one estimate.

O'Brien couldn't wait till Christmas to bestow yet more presents, though. He has said he will allow Connex South Central and South West Trains, among other franchises, to increase fares by 2 percent above inflation — on the grounds of good operating performance. Opraf also promised to carry out two surveys a year of overcrowding but just one is being made. The resulting figures are massaged to hide instances of severe overcrowding by taking an average figure for each franchise (see *Eye* 931), circumventing fines for the beloved operators.

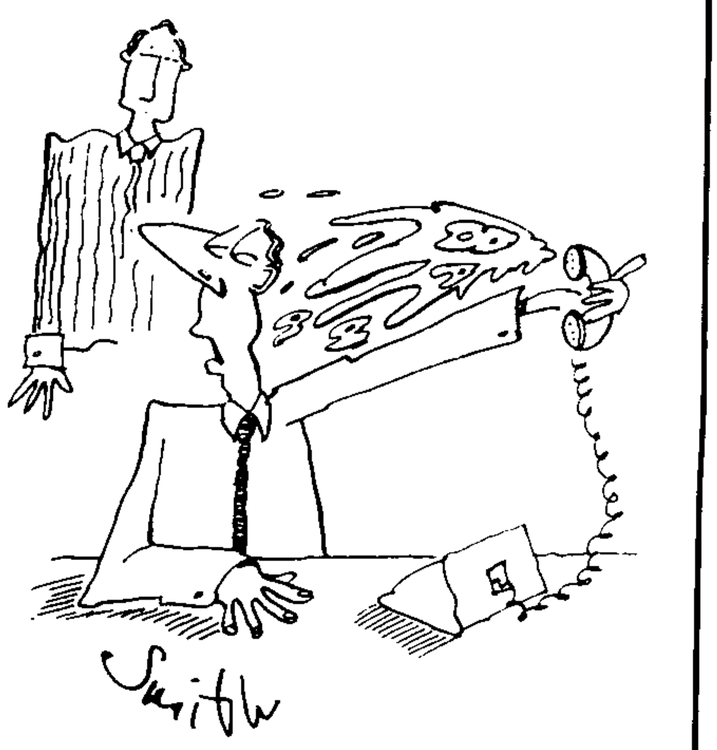
Perhaps O'Brien's favourite favourites are the InterCity franchises. Great Western Trains, Virgin West Coast and Great North Eastern Railway are meant to achieve at least 90 percent punctuality, according to the passenger's charter. All three failed to meet the target in their average punctuality for the 12 months to September — but O'Brien is not withholding any of their subsidies for breaking their side of the bargain.

In September, several senior figures from Great Western Trains and Opraf were involved in the Southall train crash. They were in the process of agreeing new franchise terms. Although investigations into the crash were by then raising serious questions about GWT's attitude to safety rules regarding the automatic warning system (see *Eye* 934), O'Brien last month granted GWT an extra three years of running the franchise.

● Following the piece on Virgin Rail (*Eye* 936) which highlighted, among other failings, Virgin's continually engaged info line which claims to want to bring "more people into the train-line team", one reader whose partner is looking for a job immediately wrote to Virgin to ask about joining. The equally prompt reply said: er, there are no vacancies.

It also emerges that when telephoning the service one only receives a personal reply from an operator if one presses the "have your credit card ready now" button. Other options all say "sorry we're busy". Good marketing or what?

'Dr B. Ching'



"I do wish Witherspoon wouldn't keep phoning in sick"

Rotten Boroughs

Coventry

COVENTRY council is still trying to stifle debate over the £1.5m fraud in its contract services department, CCS (*Eye* 935).

Council leader John Fletcher said there would be no further statements as they might prejudice the fraud squad inquiry. "The shutters are coming down," he intoned importantly.

Unfortunately the council is a leaky ship and new facts emerge almost by the day, with CCS workers describing widespread pilfering and how:

- One workman went to a builder's yard to collect some slabs for his garden with a 40-tonne truck and fork lift... and drove away with half the yard.
- 19th century wrought iron municipal lamp posts have been stolen and sold to rich householders.
- Some workers clock in and immediately disappear for the day.
- Expensive, nearly new equipment has been sold at knockdown prices to contractors.

Presiding over the shambles are city treasurer Peter Cordle and chair of finance Arthur Waugh. Both refuse to discuss the mess. When Waugh was finally caught by a local BBC crew at Coventry City FC he angrily brushed the hack aside. Waugh now demands an apology from presenter Ed Doolan who remarked that Waugh must be deaf after he refused to answer questions. Doolan is happy to accept he is wrong and Waugh is merely arrogant and rude.

Fight of the Week

BENT councillors are at each others throats... literally. Local MP Ken Livingstone has put down an early-day motion deploring "the attempt by Brent Conservative councillor Peter Golds OBE to strangle fellow Conservative councillor Jack Sayers following an argument about town twinning".

The skirmish centred on the council's plans to twin with South Dublin. Sayers, the only Irish Tory, was also the only Tory to support the plan wholeheartedly. When Golds realised his colleague was going to help Labour pass the scheme he lost his rag. He now claims Sayers made anti-semitic remarks to him.

PS: Golds got his gong for "political services".

Hackney

HACKNEY Labour party has come up with a bizarre way to select candidates at next May's elections: it is barring black people from the selection panel in one of Britain's most cosmopolitan boroughs "because they're all corrupt".

Officially there is no colour bar — it is just a coincidence that the panel includes no black people — but this shocking example of realpolitik was decided by the local party at a meeting which was accidentally overheard by members of Hackney's Black Socialist Group who are now thinking of quitting the party.

It stems from the scam by which hundreds of unqualified mainly Nigerian illegal immigrants were given jobs by council officers from the same tribes in the 80s and 90s.

Junkets of the Week

BERKSHIRE county council is determined not to be abolished quietly next spring: councillors are spending £100,000 on commemorative events (mainly piss-ups) to mark their passing.

Nearly half the money is to go on a memorial service at Westminster Abbey. Much of the remainder has been spent on quails' eggs and wine which is served at meetings to alleviate the stress of being a Berkshire councillor at this tragic time.

All this will do much to placate parents and pupils at Willink school in Burghfield which is uninhabitable and — by an amazing coincidence — needs £100,000 of repairs.

Meanwhile in Bradford the ruling Labour group is trying to get a grip on foreign trips. Leader John Ryan wants fellow members to reveal details of jaunts so he can keep a score. All very commendable — if the council had not put aside £45,000 to fund a series of courses for councillors in French, German and Spanish so they have the "skills and vocabulary to be confident in... undertaking council duties abroad".

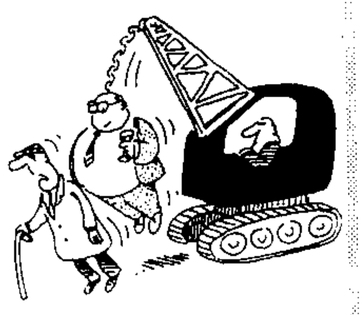
Oldham

THE Labour council's debts are so staggering — £277.8m — that Oldham pays £25m in interest and last year its debt rose by £14m.

But are councillors and officers worried? Not so worried that five leading councillors and officials have not been secretly issued with town hall credit cards. When Liberal Richard Knowles tried to find out who had a card he waited three months for an answer and was then denounced in a council meeting by treasurer Peter Fenton for jeopardising Oldham's credit-worthiness.

Knowles was also denounced by leader John Battye who revealed that he was one of the favoured five, brandished his Co-op credit card and said it was mainly for hotel bills. Why indebted Oldham's leader should need to use a hotel, he did not say.

Cock-ups corner



HYPER-efficient, Labour-run Liverpool city council's Direct Services Organisation has been setting new standards in the maintenance of council property.

As a report to the housing committee detailed, of the 980 jobs the DSO has been targeted to carry out, it has completed... five.

In **Southwark**, evidence of massive housing benefit (HB) fraud by council staff has been handed to Inspector Knacker. The head of private sector HB, Kevin Rayner, has been suspended and put on bail over an alleged £200,000 fraud.

But there was good news in Redbridge, east London, where taxpayers are smarting from the pension scandal (*Eye* 933) in which more than £1,300,000 was wrongly paid out. Deputy chief executive Stewart Fuller has been asked to repay around £250,000. So far he hasn't replied.

Pseuds Corner

"In life, there are all colours and the Teletubbies are a reflection of that... There are no nationalities in the Teletubbies — they are techno-babies, but they are supposed to reflect life in that sense."

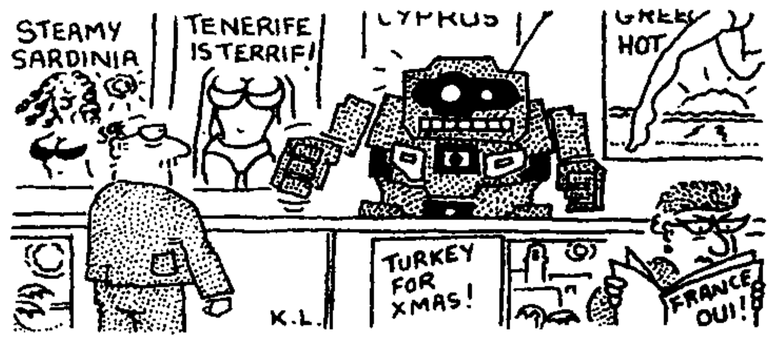
NICK UNDERWOOD (Teletubbies Marketing)
The Express

"The suburbs are the tide-mark where the culture dies. They're what's left when the culture has gone away. They're an asteroid belt of tranquillized inertia from which the culture can reinvent itself and come back into the city where it has to be tested."

IAN SINCLAIR
Newsnight

The idea of a white greatcoat is quite intoxicating in its impracticality. But what really impresses me is the idea of scented gloves. I have to confess that I dab my watchstraps with Caron's Coup de Fouet, a rich spicy scent developed by the great Parisian perfumer in the Fifties. I find it an interesting counterpoint to the single-note simplicity of Geo. F. Trumper's extract of limes.

NICHOLAS FOULKES
The Times



Beyond the Booking: Relational Processes in Travel Agency Discourse

This talk reports a discourse analytic study of the dimensions of relational talk in travel agency service encounter discourse. It examines the ways in which the participants of these encounters negotiate interpersonal relations and how they achieve sociality, an aspect hitherto ignored in studies of service encounter discourse. The data consist of audio-recordings of interactions between travel agency assistants and clients in seven different travel agencies, and the analysis of these is qualitative and interpretive, based on close readings of data.

Cardiff Language Seminar Leaflet
University of Wales, Cardiff

Vanessa Beecroft's living but mute mannequins are expressions of her unattainable love of thinness and her desire for anonymity. ***Judith Palmer*** **talks to the artist about her vicarious existence.**

..."In the beginning I just wanted the girls as support, as bodyguards," explains Beecroft. "For my first performance I just picked up girls from the street and gave them my clothes. I had 30 girls in the space and I soon realised they were more powerful than the work I was showing... Clothing has to lose its clothingness — it has to be simple, something that could be real clothes or an image of them. I'm very sick when I see a bra is too bra rather than something that covers..."

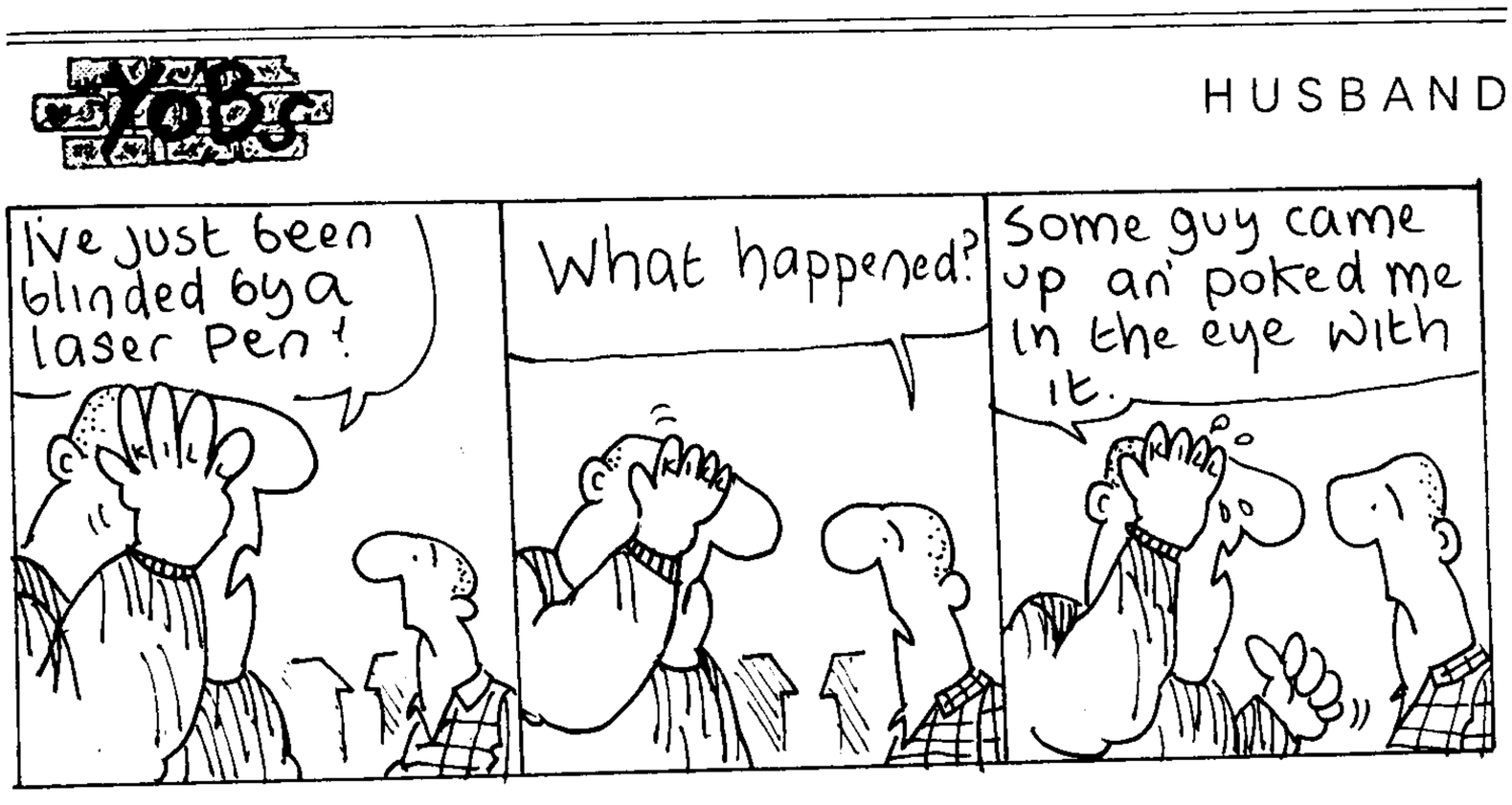
Independent

We choose, or have chosen for us, another way of living, but we remain the same person. In a way we become more like ourselves than we were before — Tony Adams and Neo-Platonism, if you like. The crashed motor car, the foaming restaurant, the confession. All these were steps on the road that led to Rome, to which Adams rode not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, but on the viewless wings of poesy.

SIMON BARNES
The Times

CONTRIBUTORS: Brian Leveson, D. Clifford, APR, David Ellis, Geoff Mungham, A.W.C. Clark.

£10 paid for entries.



Letters

Lookalike

Tom

Vita

Sir,

I wonder whether any of your readers have noticed the extraordinary resemblance between erstwhile Dr Who, Tom Baker, and notorious writer Vita Sackville-West. His recent autobiography is curiously silent on their relationship.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT BENNETT,

Banstead, Surrey.

All fine and Dando

Sir,

I never thought that the curse of priggish political correctness would spread to the EYE, *but what else are we to make of Square Eyes' curious column on the* HOLIDAY SHOW*?*

The writer seems to resent the fact that this show used to be hosted by men, but also that it is now presented by a woman. Her main sin appears to be that she is young and pleasant to behold.

I have never watched the show, but have seen the promotional clips. Jill Dando is an experienced broadcasting journalist and her good looks have clearly helped her TV career.

So what? If you're 7ft tall you are more likely to earn big money as a basketball player than if you're 6ft tall. Where is the problem? If Jill Dando pulls in more viewers than, say, Janet Street-Porter or Germaine Greer would, what's the beef? Does the reporter have to look like Khruschev's wife?

I think Square Eyes needs to get out more.

Best wishes,
DAVID J. FULLER,

Lancaster, Lancs.

Unsafe verdict

Sir,

*The letter in your last issue from the Rev Dr Walker-Riggs ("Tablets of stone") serves to illustrate a common misconception about medicines, namely that they can be made "safe" in cases of overdose by the inclusion of a built-in antidote. Medicines can be made safe***r***, or less dangerous, but in no way can they be treated with disregard to the potentially fatal consequences of overdose.*

The inclusion of DL-Methionine in paracetamol preparations is designed to reduce the risks from accidental overdose, and to delay the onset of liver damage in cases of acute deliberate poisoning. Methionine must be given regularly — every four hours for four doses — to prevent liver failure, so taking an overdose all in one go will not be without risk of permanent and possibly fatal liver damage.

In the sad case of "Julie", had the tablets she took contained methionine, the delay in onset of liver failure may well have given her time to be admitted to hospital for proper care **had she informed her family on the Saturday morning of her actions the previous night**. *Keeping quiet about her overdose would have been as fatal as taking paracetamol in the first place.*

There is no easy solution to the prevention of intentional overdose. ...The symptoms of acute poisoning may not become apparent for several hours after ingestion, by which time it is often too late.

If you realise that you have made a mistake, tell somebody immediately. But please, no more calls for a safe form of paracetamol — in severe overdose it does not exist!

Yours sincerely
MIKE WILLIAMS, YPG.

Coventry.

"How many times? From the diaphragm!"

Circumcision Special

● *These letters have been cut without permission. Ed.*

...I am disgusted by the views expressed by the circumcisers Willetts and Scrivener in PRIVATE EYE*'s 30 October edition.*

I was circumcised as a baby, to my lifelong regret, because my mother preferred it — but they were not her genitals she was mutilating, they were mine...
ROGER SPENCE.

...Had K. Willetts worked in Japan, Finland or Denmark she would know that male circumcision (in particular child circumcision) is unnecessary. These countries which avoid circumcision report no greater incidence of genital problems than those where circumcision is practised. One wonders why certain medical professionals fail to take this information on board... Had J.P. Scrivener researched the subject further, she would know that the glans penis is not highly sensitive. The most sensitive area is the prepuce (foreskin) which is removed during circumcision...
H.M. PERRY.

...Circumcision, as practised by doctors in North America, is a unique example of prophylactic surgical treatment without the patient's consent. Why are conditions such as urinary tract infection and cancer of the penis, the one easily treated with antibiotics and the other extraordinarily rare, singled out for prophylactic surgery in infancy? Is it not that there is some primitive urge to mutilate the genitals of defenceless children, and that this urge needs to be justified by some pseudo-medical support? If we were to pursue the policy of removal of redundant infant body parts to reduce disease in later life to its logical conclusion we could find ourselves removing male and female breasts, one gonad, one eye, one kidney and one lung.

Dr Scrivener suggests that mutilation of the unconsenting infant is justified as he claims, without any evidence that I know of, that circumcision "vastly increases the satisfaction of the female". The alleged benefit to a third party is hardly an ethical justification for the operation, which, as he so rightly states, lessens the sensitivity of the glans penis. The degree of reduction of sensitivity is unfortunately extremely variable and unpredictable, and in some men sensitivity is reduced virtually to zero, so that the operation vastly decreases the satisfaction of the male...
DR JOHN WARREN FRCP.

...Does Dr Scrivener (Letters, EYE *936) seriously suggest that male circumcision is necessary because (according to him) it prolongs sexual intercourse, and thus should be pursued because of the additional pleasure it affords women? He might just as well argue that female circumcision is a good thing because it keeps them "obedient to their husbands"...*
DAVE GODIN.

...If you are starting an anti-circumcision campaign, three cheers. I suspect I lost between 60 and 90 percent of my dick as a result of such mutilation... I am happy to report that my remnant still works — after a fashion...
IAN DAVIES.

...I noticed in your last issue that two doctors recommended men undergo circumcision, since this is known to give enhanced sexual pleasure for the female. Quite right, too. And I trust these eminent physicians will also be happy to recommend that women undergo breast-implant operations, since this is known to give enhanced sexual pleasure to the male.

Equality is equality, after all...
PATRICK WALKER.

...Nobody but a certain kind of medic could regard death or accidental penectomy as "negligible disbenefits". Why doesn't Karen Willetts acknowledge the main "considerable benefit" which the non-NHS medical profession derives from this practice — "several hundred" nice fees?...
NEIL HICKMAN.

...For Dr Scrivener's information the organ that postpones the male orgasm is the **brain**. *There is no surgical "quick fix" for premature ejaculation, though a doctor's wish to find one, for this and a host of other complaints comes as no surprise...*
DERRICK HALE.

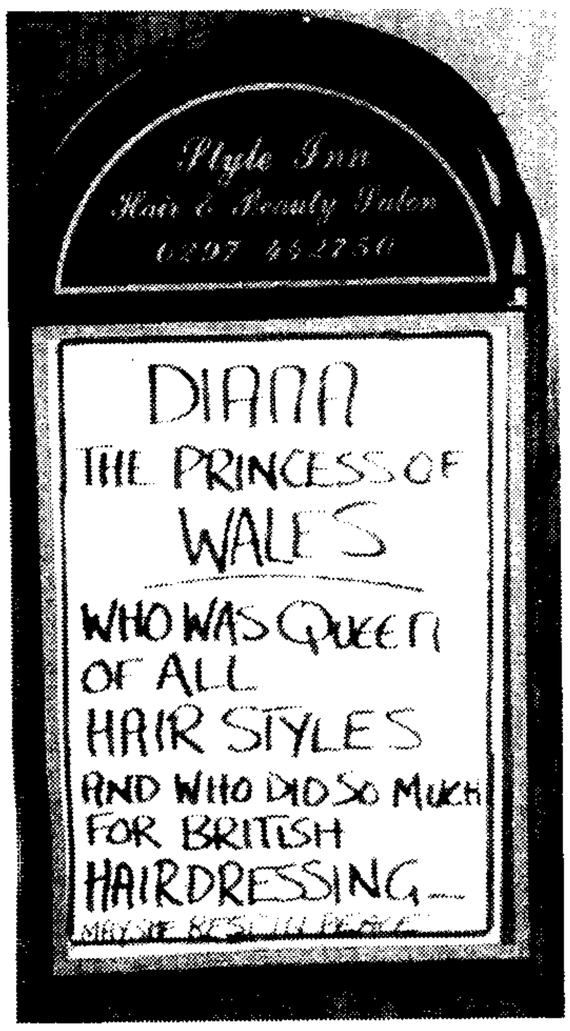
...Dr Karen Willetts points out that some statistics in the US "suggest" a lower incidence of urinary tract infections and STDs among men who have been circumcised. Even taking this statement at its dubious face value, it hardly seems a compelling reason for a surgical procedure being imposed on a healthy newborn. For such a minimal advantage, the operation could easily be left until adulthood...
JAMES HARLSTON.

...Dr Karen Willetts (Letters, EYE *936) argues, contrary to MD, in favour of circumcision, mainly on the grounds of cleanliness. Presumably by the same token she also favours the removal of all natural teeth and their replacement by dentures for the sake of oral hygiene?...*
Name and address supplied.

...There can be no scientific way to compare subjective intensity of arousal and orgasm — how can I know how excited or satisfied my brother is? — but a simple analogy should help Dr Willetts conclude that the uncircumcised must logically have a clear advantage. Let her imagine that she went around with her tongue permanently hanging out, unprotected, assaulted every minute of the day by clothing, towels, the shower, bedclothes, sea and air pollution, etc: does she believe that her appreciation of food could compare with that of someone who employed their taste buds only for eating?...
JAMES GOURLEY.

I-SPY

Lyme Regis



Submitted by David Howarth. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Ancient and modern

Sir,

In Street of Shame (EYE *936) you accuse all-round media personality Mr Andrew Neill of ageism. This is a serious allegation, which in this new age of decent and compassionate journalism really should not be made without supporting evidence — for example, firm proof that he clings to the company and clothing of a younger generation.*

Yours faithfully,
TIM BENBOW,

St Antony's College, Oxford.

Anne Agony

Sir,

Your Hackwatch report on Anne Atkins just shows how refreshingly straightforward and devoid of psychobabble she is. You may not like the religious basis of her morality, but at least she's open about it.

Regards,
NICK THOMPSON,

Via e-mail.

A time traveller writes...

Sir,

Trains between the Midlands and London are indeed unpunctual (Dr B. Ching, EYE *936), under the slack management which has followed the franchising policy of the previous government.*

I was 10 minutes early approaching London on 12 successive trips recently, under the slack schedules which have followed the "charter" policy of the previous government.

I know it's difficult with so many targets, but could it be that my stopwatch is more accurate than the one used by Opraf?

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL OAKLEY,

Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands.

Connew and goodbye

Sir,

As a regular EYE *reader I was fascinated by the references to me in Street of Shame (935). However, a couple of your source's assumptions need putting into perspective.*

While the inference I have somehow sold my "silence" sounds intriguing, the truth is far more mundane. Lawyers negotiated an amicable conclusion to a contractual matter.

Also, I have always on principle viewed senior journalists bad-mouthing each other across crowded courtrooms as an unedifying spectacle best avoided if possible. The only judges who really matter are the readers and their verdicts tend to be delivered via circulation graphs.

Finally, I would like to think that the majority of former colleagues understand and appreciate the above rather than feel "miffed".

Regards,
PAUL CONNEW,

London NW1.

Splott on his copybook

Sir,

May I suggest that Piloti check his facts before ranting in future? The Nooks and Corners section of the last PRIVATE EYE, *featuring Cardiff, was riddled with errors.*

Piloti claims that the statues given to the city by Lord Rhondda are to be moved from the City Hall to the County Hall in Cardiff Bay. This is simply untrue.

The Edwardian interior of the council chamber in the City Hall will not be removed to make way for the journalists attending the Euro summit in 1998. As a recent press release from Cardiff county council clearly states, a temporary floor is to be installed above the seats to avoid any damage being caused to them.

There has also been no suggestion that the Welsh assembly will be housed in a new building in Cardiff Bay. The City Hall will be its official residence as soon as the act has gone through parliament. Finally, Piloti succeeded in omitting the "s" from "Cathays Park" (the area of the city on which the article was based) no less than five out of a possible five times. Is this a one-off catalogue of errors or should I doubt the accuracy of the entire magazine?

Yours faithfully,
JAMES THOMAS,

Cardiff.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"...and talking of the devil, at number 18 it's Agnus Dei..."

NICK BAILEY, Classic FM
(Marcus Davison)

Dutch Commentator: *What's your first impression of the PSV stadium?*

Kenny Dalglish: *I've been here before.*

Dutch Commentator: *What's your second impression of the PSV stadium?*

Kenny Dalglish: *It's very nice.*

Nederlands 2 TV
(Mark Chambers)

"Israeli troops have this morning entered the Arab township of Hebron, in search of the perpetrators of the recent suicide bomb attacks in Jerusalem, whom they believe are in hiding there."

CNN News International
(Eric Hall)

"A fascinating duel between three men."

DAVID COLEMAN, BBC1
(Robert Turney)

"Scholes hits the goalpost — he could hardly have hit that any better."

BBC World Service
(Indrajit Advani)

APOLOGIES - Sorry Leonard, Nelson MANDELA was of course in Gaol, not in Goal. (September)

The Golden Valley News

LUVVIES

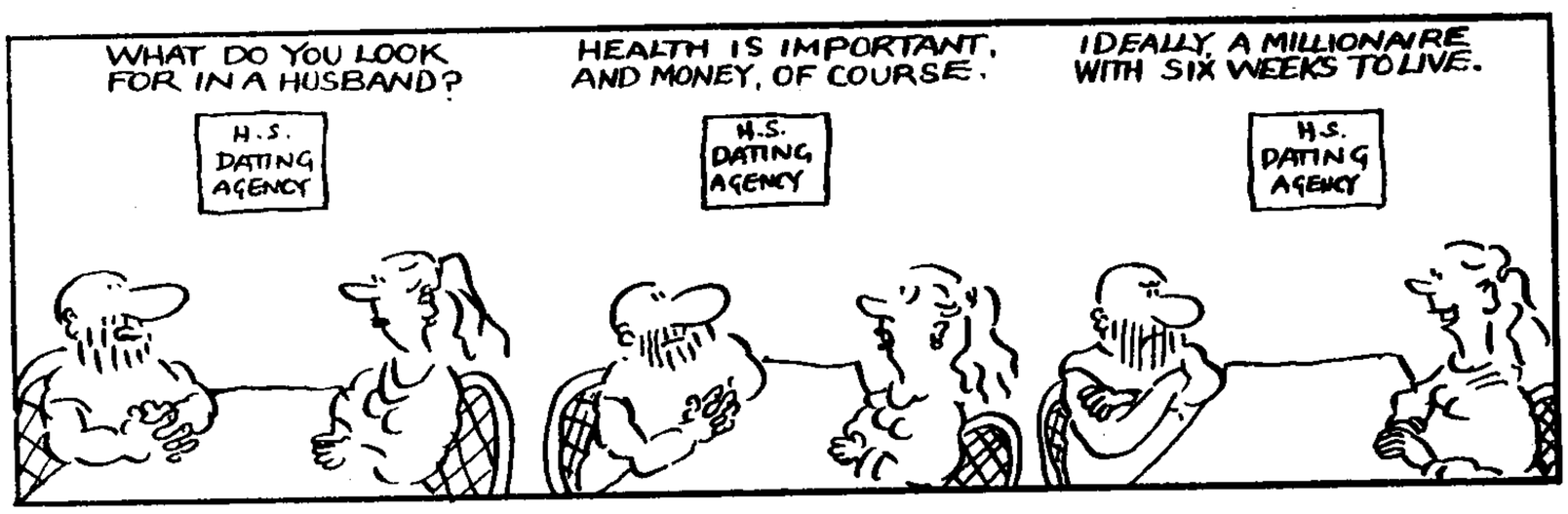
"When you get in a cab and the driver says 'We miss you on TV', I do want to go back and do something that big again. It's like giving the public a big Christmas present."

ANITA DOBSON (on EastEnders)
Time Out

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN

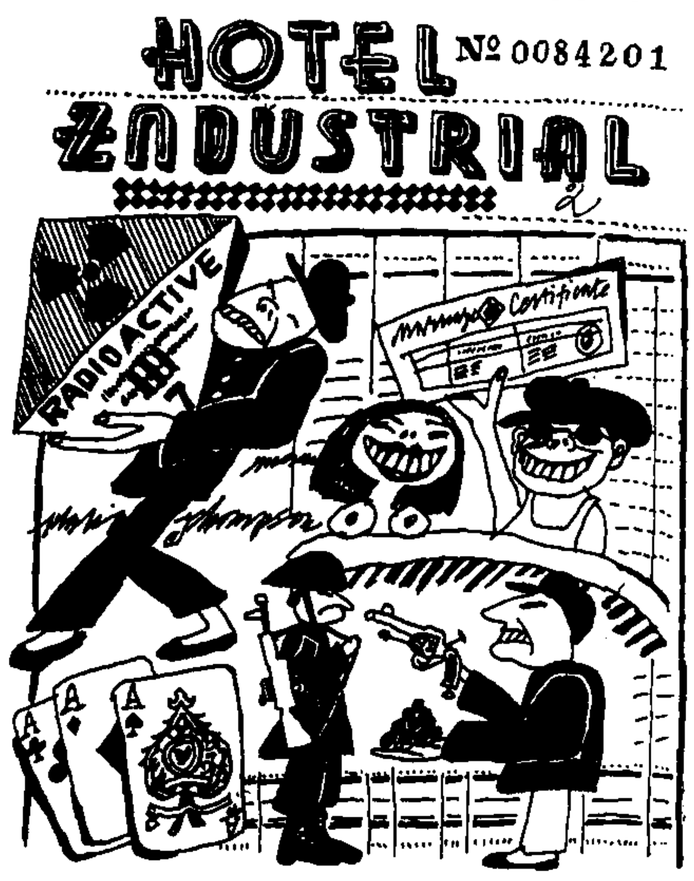

WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A HUSBAND?
H.S. DATING AGENCY
HEALTH IS IMPORTANT, AND MONEY, OF COURSE.
H.S. DATING AGENCY
IDEALLY, A MILLIONAIRE WITH SIX WEEKS TO LIVE.
H.S. DATING AGENCY

FUNNY OLD WORLD

o Znformation for the Guest.

In order to stablize social system. strengthen the manage of public security. To ensure the 'Hotel zndustrial' and the life of the guest and their proporty.by the rules of the law in our country. So work out this information will you see.

Staying people have to have 'work demonstration'. 'personal credentials Driving linces' and another credentials' after check out have been registered and people can be stayed in our hotel. Foriegner. Foring chinese (forign Tibetan) Hong-kang person. Aomen person Must have the passport, abroading permit'. Fill the paper of staying our hotel will deliver it to the public security organs. at once. If the forign organs agreed you staying. You can take the procedures for staying. When you are leaving must have the leaving procedures if you want to Keep Stay. You ought to have the procedures before 12o'clock in that day. Please finis hed your procedures before Twleveo'clock.If you won't We will take half of Fees for it, after Twelve o'clock, We will take the whole fees.



Staying guest must steep on their own bed. Don't change. (aperson. ane bed).Instead of room or beds. Don't. detain celatives and good friends.fellow-vellager. Sleepon one bed in aroom. against. Mal and the famal steep in one room. not wicked only safely. A coulple sleep in one room must have marriage lines.or have the certificate toprove they are coulples. If.staying people entres (or go out of) the door in our hotel have to showing their certificate. If when they meet someone, they have to fill the procedures for meetsb. must leaving before 12o'clock in the evening if you won't esecurity organs has the privilage to give you a lesson.

staying people's hand bag luggage. and another sub Jucts. please keep it in the storeroom, mportant document and expensive Sub Juct, must keep it carefully, yourself. the gun and balls who carryed. must keep it in the local public securityorgans. The PLA man and the police man who carry gunsand ball must give it to the locial army keep it carefully, if they are stealed or. robbed. please Are responsible it themself.

Staying people don't carry. easy putrid subJuct. easy plode thing. poison and the radioactirity thing in our hotel. if don't if appear robbed stealed appearance of thing. You are in charge of it yourself. please.

Staying people have to obey. the rules of the law. Don't. drunking. gambling, pick quarel and make trouble and come to blows. and spred sex actionswhich broke the law. sayingsor doings ought to polity. Don't make loice please sleeping before 12o'clock.

Staying people don't use electricity stove. and Another stove. again'st the accident break out.

Staying people must keep clean. don't expectorate, Don't throw rubbish, cigrette stamp forbid sb. to stool urine and so on. if you have urgent. communicate. you tell sever in time.

Staying people must be look good care of public propority. Door window. Glass beds TVS. Telephone and so on, pay the full price for any thing prise.

Attendant of our hotel. if don't supply good service. or. manage not good Any comments and suggestions are welcome. strengthen the management of our hotel. Inordr to service for the people.

Staying people you best to obey this information and the rules of manage in our hotel if break we Will According. the rules to punlish.

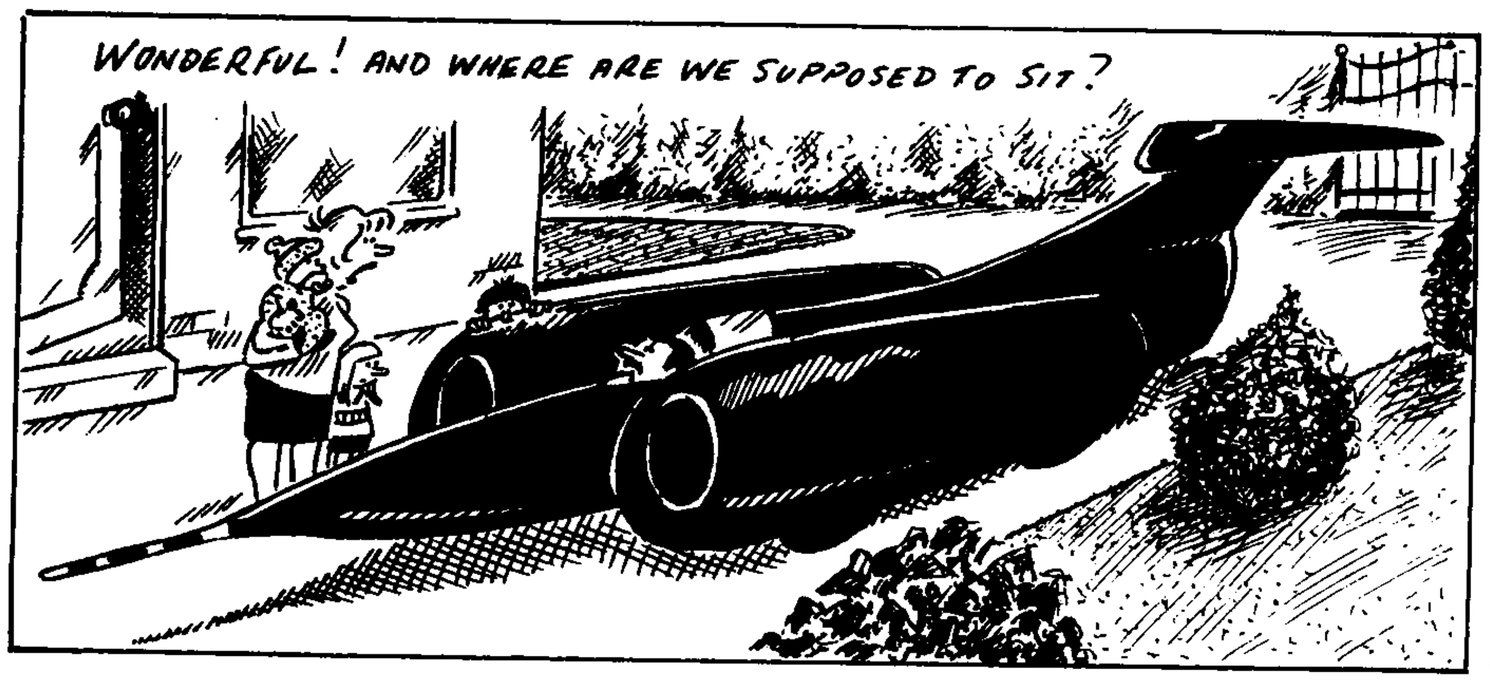
Each Staying people which stayed in NaQu area (include each Count). worke in country. Collectivizate. Single hotel transport station. the whole Guest have to obey this information. if broke we will excute. According. this if break the law punish according the law of our country.

NaQu Area Public Securityorgans NaGQu Hotel *(Hotel regulations, Nagqu, China. Spotter: Sam Forster)*

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

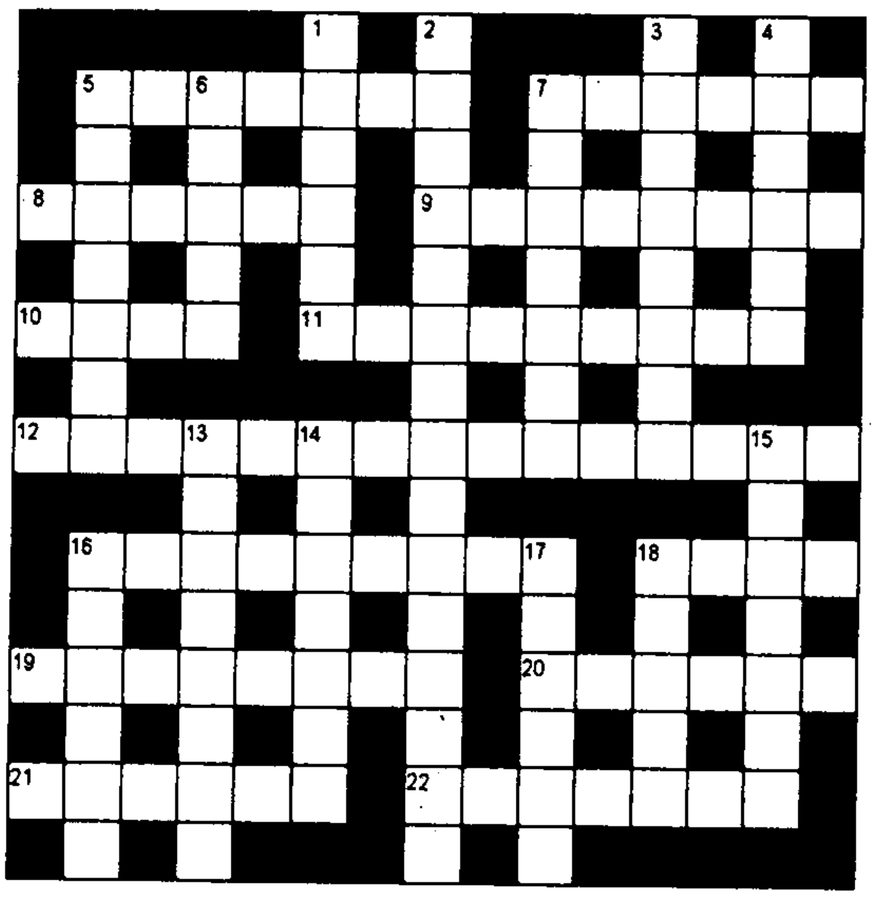
The Lottery Winners

TURNER



EYE CROSSWORD 92

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

5/7dn/10 Dick's into genitalia on account of some backbencher's legislation (7,7,4)
7 Supports sexual partners (6)
8 Poor Kylie, losing interest to live, all following the debut of Juliet Stevenson's character (6)
9 City editor *(Scotsman)* on speed (8)
10 (see 5)
11 Sort of farce that's representative of central government? (9)
12 Rag promoting its owner's views undergoing re-location — and a change of heart, possibly? (5, 10)
16 PM heady, that is quite disoriented, by press overstatement (5,4)
18 State involved in fellatio watch (4)
19 Adore, after one 'E' and some cocaine, a story (8)
20 Will-inspired character, a complete arse (6)
21 British brand of imperturbability? Makes you spit! (6)
22 Sun-smitten, uneducated white reactionary? (7)

DOWN

1 Plummy luvvie caught mounting Grant (6)
2 Congenital piss-artists? The Lords has its share of those! (10,5)
3 Variety act with dog makes you flee! (4,4)
4 Constitutional way to rob a drunk? (6)
5 Blair first showing: Clare's last to leave (7)
6 Heaven on earth, though a tad untidy, Llangollen! (5)
7 (see 5)
13 A devotee is to attach computer chip to ex-PM (8)
14 (see 18)
15 Big city virgin comes to town (3,4)
16 Night fliers inhaling nitrogen to induce periods (6)
17 Implants causing those people commonly to have rows (6)
18/14 Saucy *Eye* feature: 'Ten nameless men Horatio screwed' (2,3,7)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 21.11.97. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 91

Winner: T.J. PROCTER

ACROSS: 6/18 Drop dead gorgeous 7 Hom Sap 10 Animal 11 Feminist 12 Majestic 14 Dieted 15 Red tape 17/16 Massage parlours 20 Opener 22 Coronary 24 Twosome 25 Bonked 27 Kroner 28 Unlawful.

DOWN: 1 Irangate 2 Spam 3 Zealot 4 Edifice 5 The media 8 (see 21) 9 Aisle 13 Elton John 16 (see 17) 18 (see 6) 19 Screw up 21/8 Peter Mandelson 23 Rabble 26 News.

LET'S PARLER FRANGLAIS

avec Tony et Jacques!!

Numéro 94: Tony et Jacques go to le Canary Wharf.

Jacques Chirac *(pour c'est lui)*: Ah, Tony! C'est très moderne, la nouvelle Bretagne, n'est-ce pas!

Tony: Oui! C'est cool! C'est pivotal, c'est le nouveau brand de Royaume Uni! Qu'est-ce vous reckon then?

Jacques Chirac: Nul points!! Ha ha ha! Et maintenant les marks pour le chanson Norwegien!

(Chirac sits on le sofa d'Habitat qui collapses immédiatement)

Tony: C'est just like votre government, n'est-ce pas? Ha ha ha!

Chirac: Le next time, je preferais Chequers, s'il vous plait. Les sofas sont beaucoup plus comfortables.

Tony: Ha! Vous n'êtes pas half as cool as nous Anglais. Nous sommes almost froid *(Ça suffit, Reditor)*

That Anglo-French Canary Wharf Summit Menu In Full

prepared by England's top chef **Tony Bulldog**
(formerly Jean-Claude Botticelli von Heydseck)

Cream of Alastair Campbell's Soup

— ❋ —

Fillet of Emu (underdone) on a Sofa of Lettuce-In

— ❋ —

U Turnedos Steaks with New Labour Potatoes and a Jospin of French Has-Beans

— ❋ —

Blockade of Lamb with a Chirac of Jam Français

— ❋ —

Canary Wharffle with Fudge Sauce

— ❋ —

Conrad Black Coffee with Cherie Brandy

— ❋ —

Diners are reminded by the management that this is a first sitting and ministers are asked to vacate their tables within one hour to allow suitable profit to be made for Sir Terence Conman.

Smoking is compulsory in all areas.

BBC 24 HOUR NEWS
What you missed

(Man in shirtsleeves with overworked staff in background trying to think of some news)

Gavin Essler: And the main news is that the BBC's 24 Hour News Service is up and running. Later in the programme we'll be looking at the early part of this programme and then we'll be giving you full details of the BBC's 24 Hour News Service. But first News Update with someone else.

Blonde Woman *(for it is she)*: The BBC has launched its first ever 24 Hour News Service. Speaking earlier on this channel, a BBC spokesman, Mr Gavin Essler, said that he could confirm that the BBC had indeed launched a 24 Hour News Service. We'll be talking to Mr Essler later in the programme. Gavin?

Essler: Thank you, blonde woman. The latest on the BBC 24 Hour News Service story... *(caption "LIVE")* ...is that the service is on the BBC and it lasts for 24 hours. That's a whole day in any language.

Blonde Woman: Can you expand on that, Gavin, er... for maybe 24 hours?

(Viewer wakes up and turns off television)

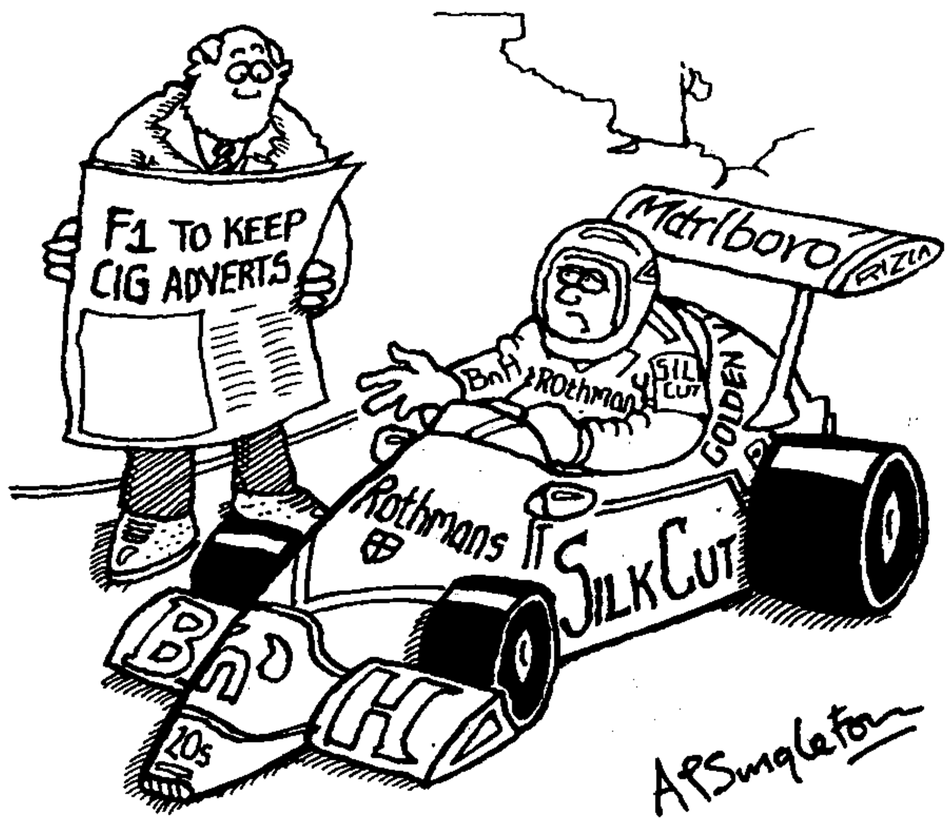
©24 Hour Birtnews ("No News Is Our News")

If you have a news story that you would like Gavin Essler to read, e-mail us now at zzz.Birttosh.uk.co.zzz

Ten Tell-Tale Signs That Britain Is Cool

1. Tony Blair is cool.
2. Terence Conran's food is cool.
3. Body Shop is cool.
4. The Spice Girls are really cool.
5. England 0 Italy 0. Cool!
6. John Galliano sounds a cool guy, whoever he is.
7. Modern sofas are cool.
8. Cappuccino is cool, even though it's meant to be hot.
9. It's very cool for the time of year.
10. Don't cool us, we'll cool you.

Statistics compiled by The Central Office of Official Labour (COOL), P. Mandelson prop.



"We're addicted to them..."

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

There's been a lot of silly talk in the parish recently about consistency and sticking to your principles.

I'm thinking especially of the promise which we made (or, to be precise, Mr Dobson did) that this parish magazine would ban any adverts for tobacco in its pages.

As you will see, in this issue we are proud to carry a number of advertisements for Marlboro, one of the world's finest tobacco companies.

Some of you may think that there is an inconsistency here, and that this represents something of a "U-turn"! All I can say to them is what complete rubbish!! *(Luke, 22 v.13)*

Surely, it is a sign of strength to be able to say one thing one minute, and then something else the next?

It shows that one is being flexible, pragmatic and really listening to what people are telling us.

Look. We have to live in the real world! *(John, 6 v.7-8)*

If we don't take these advertisements, there'll be someone else who will — someone much less responsible, who will try to link smoking with some glamorous, fashionable figure to attract young people.

But that's in the end what really matters — to keep young people away from this filthy, disgusting habit.

We should be encouraging them to take up healthy outdoor sports like snooker, darts and Formula One motor racing!

Yours consistently,

Tony

Third World Outreach

■ *Our overseas mission co-ordinator Claire Short has come up with a marvellous plan to end world poverty in 20 years. This is excellent news and I am sure we all want to thank Claire for solving such a difficult problem in such a short time!*

And also, best of luck to Mr Prescott of the Working Men's Club, who has taken time off to go to America to preach the gospel of giving up motor cars to stop global warming.

People may say this is a waste of time, but remember, Rome wasn't built in a day! (Epistle to Romans, 17 v.3) *TB.*

The vicar says:
"There's no smoke without firing people"
(Ads of the Apostles 7(ii-v))

FROM THE CHURCHWARDEN, MR MANDELSON

Members of the PCC are reminded that, although they are at liberty to speak their minds at meetings, they are not allowed to do so without first asking me or Tony for permission — which will not be granted. We do not name names in this parish, but Mr Brown and Mr Cook will know who I am talking about.

PM

Something To Think About

Remembrance Day is all very well. I'd be the last one to knock it! I made sure my children turned up in their best sweatshirts and hardly yawned in the service at all!

But surely in today's world we should all be looking forward, not constantly harking backwards. Let's remember the future, not the past! *TB*

Notices

● Mr Foster's long awaited talk, **"Our Friend The Fox"** will now go ahead. But, unfortunately, due to pressure of time, no one will be allowed to attend. We are very grateful to Mr Foster for all the effort he has put into this splendid cause.

● The hunt will meet as usual on the Vicarage Lawn on Thursday. Punch will be served by Mrs Mortimer and Baroness Mallalieu. Thank you, ladies! TB

Parish Music

Due to a shortfall in fundraising this year, the St Albion's church choir is to be amalgamated with the Gilbert and Sullivan operatic society and the Brownies' song and dance troupe (the "Nice Girls" — youngest member, Emma, aged four!). Good luck to you all in your new venue, alternate Wednesdays in the Church Hall.

Chris Smith

Verses By A Local Poet

On Guy Fawkes Night I saw a rocket
Soaring high in the frosty air,
"What's that called?" a toddler asked me,
I told him "Son, that's a Tony Blair"!

D. Puttnam, Manager, the St Albion Odeon

Christenings

It is a great pleasure to report that at recent christenings by far the most popular names have been the following:

Boys	**Girls**
Tony	Antonia

One little chap was actually baptised Tony Blair Perkins!

Well done! *TB*

THE SUN SAYS

Is Louise Innocent?

You decide

Yes, she is — ring 0809 45267

Yes, she is — ring 0801 45268

Calls charged at 38p a second. All proceeds go to the Sun "Louise Is Innocent" fighting fund.

THE SUN ALSO SAYS

Sing A Song For Louise on Remembrance Day

Chuck your poppy in the bin, and put on a yellow ribbon instead. That'll show those bloodthirsty Yanks we've not forgotten our Queen of Nannies. The whole country is united, to sing with one voice the new national anthem:

Nanny In The Wind

Goodbye, English au pair.
Though I never knew you at all.
But I've seen you on the telly
And it made me want to bawl.
And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a nanny in the wind.
Etc. Etc.

© Elton Village

And The Sun Has Thought Of Something Else To Say

We say the Americans' treatment of Louise is so disgusting that prime minister Blair should send in the SAS to rescue Louise, whatever the loss of life that this would involve.

We must bring baby Louise home for Christmas with her loved ones.

● **American-owned products that you must boycott to show how much you care:**

1. **McDonald's Hamburgers**
2. **Coca Cola**
3. **Levi jeans**
4. **The Sun newspaper**

Fox Fishing for Beginners

with Michael Foster MP, angler and anti-hunting protester

1. Impale rabbit/chicken/pheasant on a large treble hook and place outside earth.

2. When fox takes the bait, play it for extended period by pulling it across country ("drag fishing").

Important Note

This sport is in no way cruel as proved by the millions of people in Britain who regularly fish and come from traditional Labour-voting backgrounds.

'I AM INNOCENT'

Briton's Desperate Plea

by Our Legal Staff **Joshua Rozenbeard**

THE WHOLE world was moved to tears of laughter yesterday by the continued campaign of the tragic British MP, Neil Hamilton, to clear his name.

Thousands of supporters did not attend a night-time vigil and no one wore yellow ribbons in an emotional display of solidarity with the 49-year-old British parliamentarian.

"I have done nothing wrong," sobbed Neil as the pressure mounted to lock him up for the rest of his life.

"Neil has not had a fair trial," claimed his close relative, Mrs Hamilton, "because he knew he would lose to the Guardian."

There have been no calls for a review of the British judicial system and legal experts are agreed that nothing must be done to overturn the guilty verdict.

Neil Hamilton is appealing to no one.

Join the Eye campaign to "Jail Our Neil"

Just send a cash donation at once in a brown envelope to Neil Hamilton, c/o Harrods.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

SIMON FULLER, EX-SPICE GIRLS MANAGER
So WHAT WERE YOU WORKING ON WITH THE BAND BEFORE THEY FIRED YOU?
EVERYTHING!!! .... SPICE GIRL DEODORANT, HAIR PRODUCTS, CLOTHES, TOY DOLLS, CRISPS...
SPICE
sniff!
ERM YES, BUT DID YOU MAKE ANY PLANS WITH THEM FOR AN ALBUM?
OF COURSE
OBVIOUSLY PEOPLE WHO'VE BOUGHT THE SPICE CAMERA NEED SOMEWHERE TO PUT THEIR PHOTOS....

TURNER SAVAGES 'MURDOCH' HITLER

TED TURNER, head of global news service CNN, has savaged the infamous wartime dictator Adolf Hitler, even going so far as to compare him to the evil Rupert Murdoch.

A biographer of Hitler's tried to defend his subject, when he said: "It is stupid and cheap to compare one of the 20th century's leading despots to the former leader of the German Reich."

In Turner's scathing attack, he is reported to have said: "We all know it's a tragedy the way that Hitler was allowed to march through Europe like he did, it reminded me of the way the evil Rupert Murdoch jackbooted his way across the United Kingdom, he is nasty, horrible, and what's more I'm better and richer than him, as well as being a lot more popular. And another thing, my empire's bigger than his empire".

LATE NEWS

Spice Girls To Meet God — "This is greatest moment of my life," says Deity.

Poetry Corner

Lines Written On The Announcement That Mr Nigel Kennedy Wishes In Future To Be Known Simply As "Kennedy".

So. Farewell then
Nigel Kennedy
Famous Violinist.

From now on the world
Will know you
Only as
"Kennedy".

Keith said that
In years to come
Everyone will remember
Where they were
When they heard
The news about
"Kennedy".

"Thribb"
(formerly E.J. Thribb, 17½)

BRITAIN'S MOST POPULAR COMEDY EVER

THE FULL MANDY 15

Will these desperate men drop everything? Will they go the whole way and throw off every shred of self-respect? Will they do ANYTHING for applause?
Yes.
Watch out for the Full Mandy. You'll laugh. You'll cry. You'll wish they were unemployed again.

Featuring the hit song EU SEXY THING by Hot Chocolate Style Substance With High Vegetable Fat Content

DON'T MISS IT - BE PART OF IT.
STILL SHOWING AT CINEMAS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Yes! It's Britain's Newest Fanzine

BLAIRZONE

Band Fax

Introducing strummin' Pete Kilfoyle, Blairzone's scouse Backin' Guitarist.

PETER, 51, keeps pretty much in the background — in fact no one's ever heard of him — but he's just as crazee as the other boys in the band — if not more so! Pete's favourite band of all time are the Whohe?

Pete likes jammin', riffin' and developin' an integrated approach to public service provision.

Tony's Thought For The Millennium

"Oooh-Ahhh-Urghh-Ooh-Aaaah-Huhhh!"

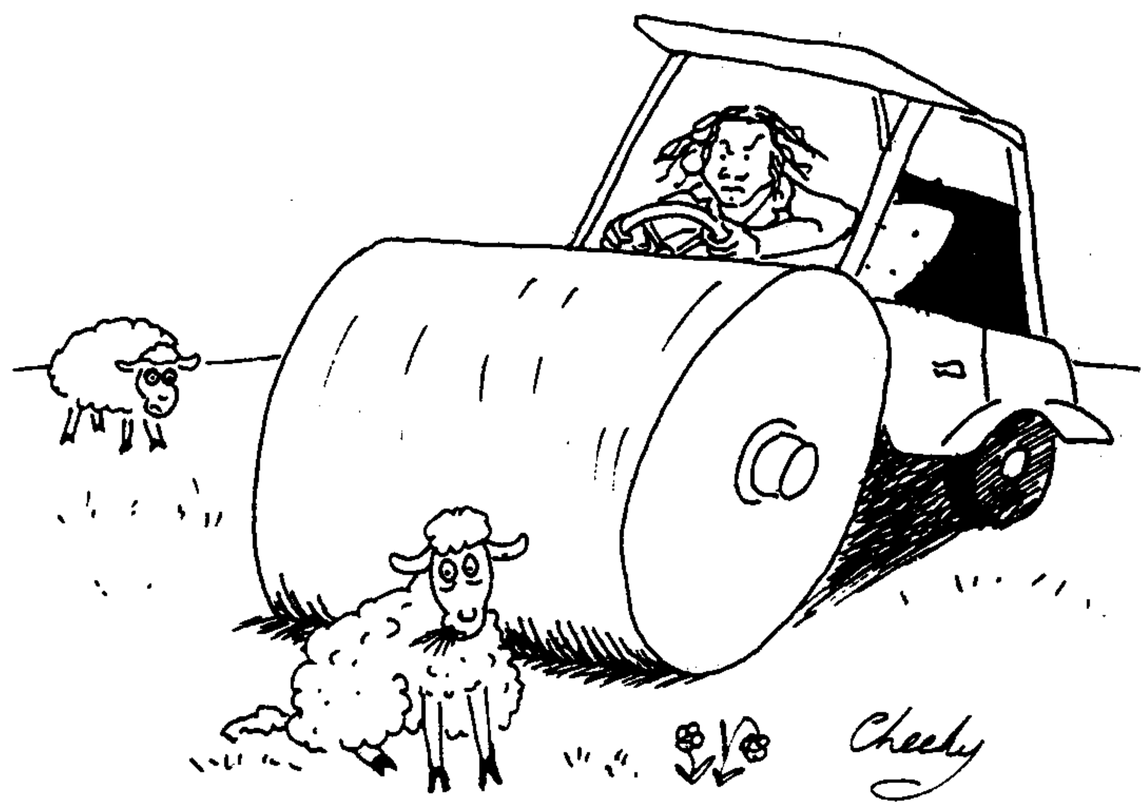
Words from the unforgettable French classic "Je m'Aime".

★★★★★

Tony's All Time Number Formula One Hitz (They're Never Off His U-Turntable!)

- ***Smoke gets in your eyes*** — *Bryan Ferry-Embarrassing*
- ***Smoke on the water*** — *Deep Purple Face*
- ***Tears of a complete clown*** — *Smokey Rothmans & The Miracles*
- ***The Snogood*** — *Camel*
- ***Puff the Magic Adman*** — *Traditional*

Damien Hirst is asked for more 2-D material



Recall of Products Notice

THE Gnome Footwear Co (formerly Shoes 'R Us) advises that a number of our recent product lines have been withdrawn, following representations from various religious groups. These include:

The Mother Teresa Scandal (No.3741x212b)

The Prophet Mohammed All-Weather Wellington (No.272/FI/5j)

The Lord Buddha Country Brogue (No.576/VR/7m)

The Dalai Lama Bedroom Slipper (No.324/LL/4r)

These names were chosen in good faith by our marketing manager, Mr Strobes, with no idea that they might possibly cause offence. However, we now accept that the brand nomenclature could well have given rise to some misunderstanding and the offending footwear has now been replaced by our new winter range which we are confident will give no cause for complaint from customers. Introducing:

The Princess Diana All-Leather Football Boot (VX 742/CC/7j) £129.99

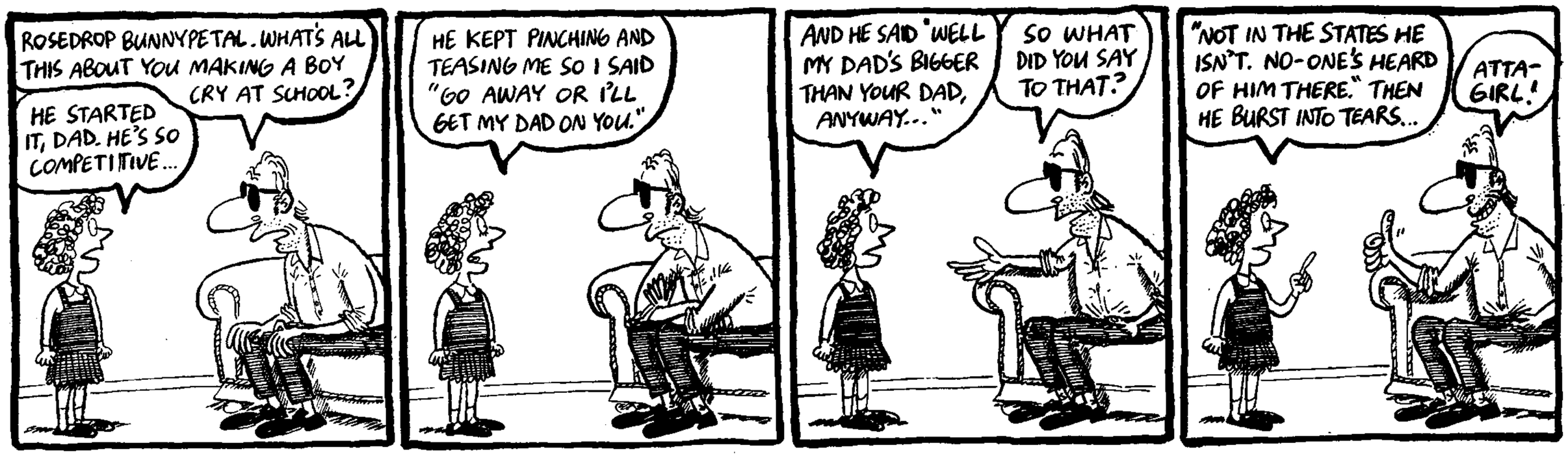
Issued by the Gnome Footwear Co, Clark House, Clarkenwell, Clarkmananshire, Scotland.

Gnome

Putting Your Foot In It!

Celeb

LIGGER


ROSEDROP BUNNYPETAL. WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT YOU MAKING A BOY CRY AT SCHOOL?
HE STARTED IT, DAD. HE'S SO COMPETITIVE...
HE KEPT PINCHING AND TEASING ME SO I SAID "GO AWAY OR I'LL GET MY DAD ON YOU."
AND HE SAID 'WELL MY DAD'S BIGGER THAN YOUR DAD, ANYWAY...'
SO WHAT DID YOU SAY TO THAT?
"NOT IN THE STATES HE ISN'T. NO-ONE'S HEARD OF HIM THERE." THEN HE BURST INTO TEARS...
ATTA-GIRL!

Prince Charles
An Apology

IN common with all other newspapers we may for several years have given the impression that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales was in some way a stuffy, out-of-touch, remote figure who was completely out of place in the modern world, and who was immensely unpopular with all his future subjects. Headlines such as "Stuck Up Charles Snubs Pressmen", "Loony Chazza Talks To Trees" and "You Murdered Our Diana, You Bastard" may have reinforced this unfortunate impression.

We now realise that Prince Charles is in fact an immensely warm, caring, casual, informal, relaxed, fun-loving, wise-cracking, switched-on modern Prince who likes nothing more than to rock 'n' roll with the Spice Girls, and to join in on drums with a bevy of topless Zulu lovelies. The "People's Prince", as he has rightly been dubbed, is moreover completely at ease with the press, many of whom have now become his closest friends.

We would like to apologise for any confusion that our reporting may have caused, and we are happy to correct this unfortunate misunderstanding by printing a 12-page full colour "King of Hearts" supplement showing pictures of the aforesaid Zulu maidens ...

"And I don't like Reeves and Mortimer either!"

THE PEOPLE'S THEATRE
(formerly the Royal Opera House and English National Opera)

PRESENTS

THE SPICE GIRLS

IN

THE TWILIGHT OF THE NOBS

OR

GUMMERDAMMERUNG

— ACT ONE —

As the curtain rises, it is taken away by the bailiffs.

The stage is filled with squabbling aristocrats who are trying to decide who can waste the most money on the worst productions.

The Lords Chadlington and Gowrie sing the celebrated duet *Siamo due gitti inutile* ("We are a couple of useless gits").

They are joined by the Baroness Blackstone, Queen of the Nightmare, accompanied by the Three Harpies, Vivien Duffield, Genista Macintosh and Mary Allen.

They sing the celebrated *Catalogue Aria* from Don Jeremyisaacs, boasting about the amount of public money they have wasted over the years (*100 millione e tre*).

— ACT TWO —

Lord Chadlington comes on to explain his plan to build the largest opera house in the world covering the whole of Covent Garden.

A huge army of workmen enter and sing the *Overtime Chorus* before falling asleep.

Dancers and singers arrive at the Odeon bingo hall, Neasden, to perform The Merry Widow and are surprised to find that nobody turns up, except Sid and Doris Bonkers who complain loudly that there is no bingo, in the duet *Sex und sechsig, clicketty-von-click* (On its own, number one).

— ACT THREE —

There is a trumpet call. Enter The Minister (Chris Smith) with his faithful Partner.

He is furious with Chadlington and Gowrie and sings the aria *Your tiny bank account is frozen*.

He then unveils his own plan to force both the opera companies into the People's Millennium Dome, where they will put on joint productions of such popular operas as *Cats*, *Starlight Express* and Walt Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*.

All ends happily when a large fluffy cloud appears, on which stands a group of anonymous, god-like donors, showering millions of pounds over everyone in sight. Lord Chadlington and Mary Allen lock in fond embrace and reprise the aria *Your Tiny Bank Account Is Now A Very Large One*. The Spice Girls then enter with Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and sing their latest best-selling aria *Madonna Is On Her Mobile*.

KARAOKE NIGHT AT THE WHITE HOUSE

The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94: A Service of Remembrance For All The Gay Servicemen and Women Who Are Already Remembered In The Original Service

President *(Peter Tatchell, for it is she)*: We shall start with a two-minute silence to remember the appalling way in which large numbers of servicemen and women were remembered purely for the fact that they gave their lives for their country and not for the fact that they were gay.

(Young men in leather jackets shall then respond with the following response)

All: Hullo sailor *(or it may be "Hullo soldier" or "Hullo airman").*

(There will then be two minutes silence while the photographers take pictures of Peter Tatchell)

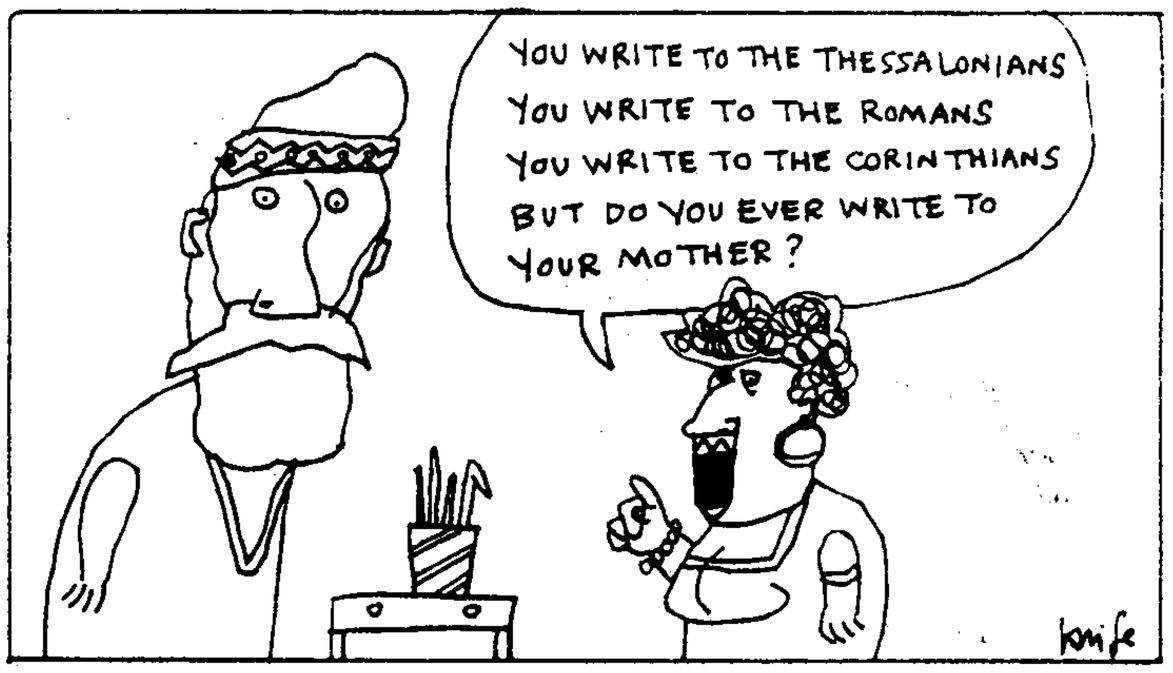
President *(reads)*: At the going down of the trousers, we shall remember them.

(Hymn: "The Gay Thou Gavest Lord Is Ended")

President: Remember, we wear our poppies with gay pride.

(The congregation shall then process to the Cenotaph in Whitehall to protest noisily during the official two minutes silence that neither Vera Lynn nor the Spice Girls are gay)

© St Peter of Tatchell 1997


YOU WRITE TO THE THESSALONIANS
YOU WRITE TO THE ROMANS
YOU WRITE TO THE CORINTHIANS
BUT DO YOU EVER WRITE TO YOUR MOTHER?
knife

Saint Paul gets a visit

Former Westminster city council leader Dame Shirley Porter and the four other members who make up the 'Westminster six'

Public Finance

We all hope and pray for peach in Northern Ireland.

Birmingham Post

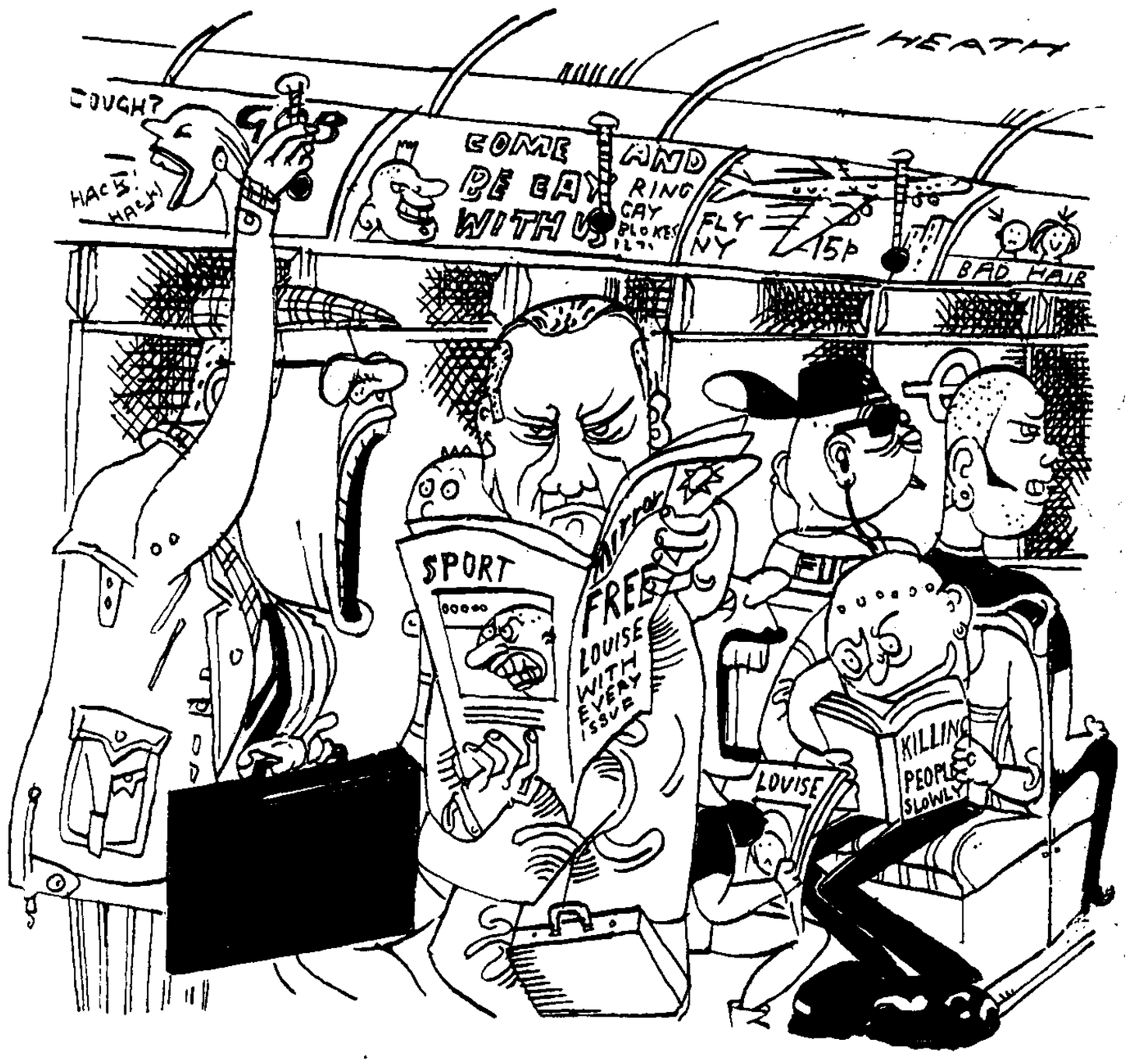
Those 100 words that conjure up our century

From the Collins Dictionary (proprietor Rupert Murdoch)

Tit
Bum
Page Three
Corr
Gotcha
Bonk
Spice Girls
Melinda Messenger
36-24-36
Love Romp
Panties
Vote Conservative
Sky TV
Sizzling
Soaraway
Kinky
Boobs
Times only 10p
Vote Labour
(continued for ever)

Harry Enfield's **Bores**
Drawn by **Michael Heath**
25. You the Jury

"Them Yanks are a bunch of nutters no way did she do it. D'you see the parents on TV? Don't get me wrong obviously I've got every sympathy with them having lost their kid but she looked like a nutter and him a mass murderer. The other girl wouldn't take the job cos the older boy was a psycho — I've set up me own web site http//www.innocent.co.uk I'd give her a job when she gets home but mind you not looking after me kids I mean there's no smoke without fire is there..."



DIARY

Cherie. That's not a Christian name I often hear as I walk the bulldog down my tree-lined avenue. Far from it. You hear plenty of good, trusty British names. Bert. Dave. Fred. John. Jane. Judy. Eileen. Yes, and even Norman. But — forgive me — I can't once recall a Cherie.

"Hurry up, Cherie!", "Hands out of pockets, Cherie!", "You'll get a sound spanking, Cherie, when your Dad gets home!". "Take your coloured friend elsewhere — I'll not have him in this house, Cherie!" Doesn't sound quite right, does it?

Could this be because Cherie is not a 100% British name after all? Sounds foreign to me. Cherry, yes. Cherie, no.

To my ordinary British ear, the word has a peculiar, almost Eastern, ring to it. Frankly, it wouldn't surprise me to find it had pitched up from India or even Pakistan. I am no expert, but to me the word Cherie suggests all-night Biryanis, beggars on street-corners, cholera, foul-smelling joss-sticks and skinny old men in National Health Specs wearing next-to-nothing telling us how to live our lives before being filmed 40 years later by overweight bleeding-heart touchy-feely wishy-washy liberal cry-babies like the self-styled Lord "Dickie" Attenborough.

Of course, if the trendy new Prime Minister of this once-great country chooses to run around with an Indian wife, that is his own concern.

But doesn't it get on your goat — as it does on mine — that the so-called People's Prime Minister can't come clean about his predilections? A word in your ear, Blair. Isn't it high time you forced your Missus into a sari? Oh, and don't forget to lock up those valuables when she finds her way indoors!

I bow to no man in my admiration of our true British Spice Girls. They are set to conquer the world, and good luck to them. In my book, they are an excellent advertisement for Great Britain.

Ginger Spice: full of bounce. Posh Spice: very stylish. Baby Spice: what a very pleasant young lady. Sporty Spice: very trim and fit.

All well and good. But to my mind there's one Spice Girl who sticks out like a sore thumb. You know who I'm talking about.

Scary Spice.

Who the hell let her in? Would someone

NORMAN TEBBIT

please be kind enough to tell me the point of this woman — if woman she is?

Her hair is neither straight nor wavy. I would call it crinkly myself. Her lips show tell-tale signs of plumpness. And — put it this way — if I were her, I'd sue the manufacturer of my sun-bed for his failure to include an "off" switch with that particular model.

Don't get me wrong. I harbour no grudge against our Friends from Overseas.

But there must be a limit. All this alien behaviour — and now we learn she has a ring through her tongue!

An honest British fiver — none of this ecu nonsense, por favor! — for the first man to tie a rope in it and lead Scary Spice back to whatever godforsaken land she hails from!

Those meddlesome Eurocrats really do have it in for the good old British motorway pile-up.

Now they have the brass nerve to tell us to drive slower in order to cut down on our cherished pile-ups — particularly in foggy weather.

Sorry, Miguel. Driving slower has never been the British way. Never has been — never will be.

It comes as no surprise that the Heseltines and Clarkes of this world have rushed to embrace this latest example of Euro-lunacy like sodomites on shore leave rushing to embrace black sailors in dark alleyways. Snug for some. But not for me.

Small wonder they turn their toffee-noses up at honest-to-goodness British fog. When the weather gets tough, these Euro-smoothies are more used to jetting off to foreign climes in their chauffeur-driven limousines. Not like the rest of us, who are forced to turn an honest penny at home.

Nothing wrong with a bit of British fog. Nothing wrong with driving like a real man in all weathers.

And if it results in a pile-up, so much the better. It's one British tradition I'm not prepared to surrender to the Euro-ninnies. *On yer bike, Jose — and smack into the oncoming traffic, s'il vous plaît.*

I see a film about Oscar Wilde is playing at my local Odeon. Would it not be more worthwhile to honour a true British hero, such as Sir Douglas Bader or Margaret Thatcher?

It's yet another example, I fear, of the limp-wristed brigade hosing us from the rooftops with their unsavoury message.

Sodomy. Not a nice word, is it? Sounds foreign to me.

And its meaning's not all that nice, either.

Let me put it in words of one syllable. It means two blokes removing their suits and ties and touching one another all over, even getting into bed together and going the whole hog — tongues, knees, fingers and heaven knows what else — before wriggling and rolling and yelping with pleasure, and begging and panting for more at the top of their voices.

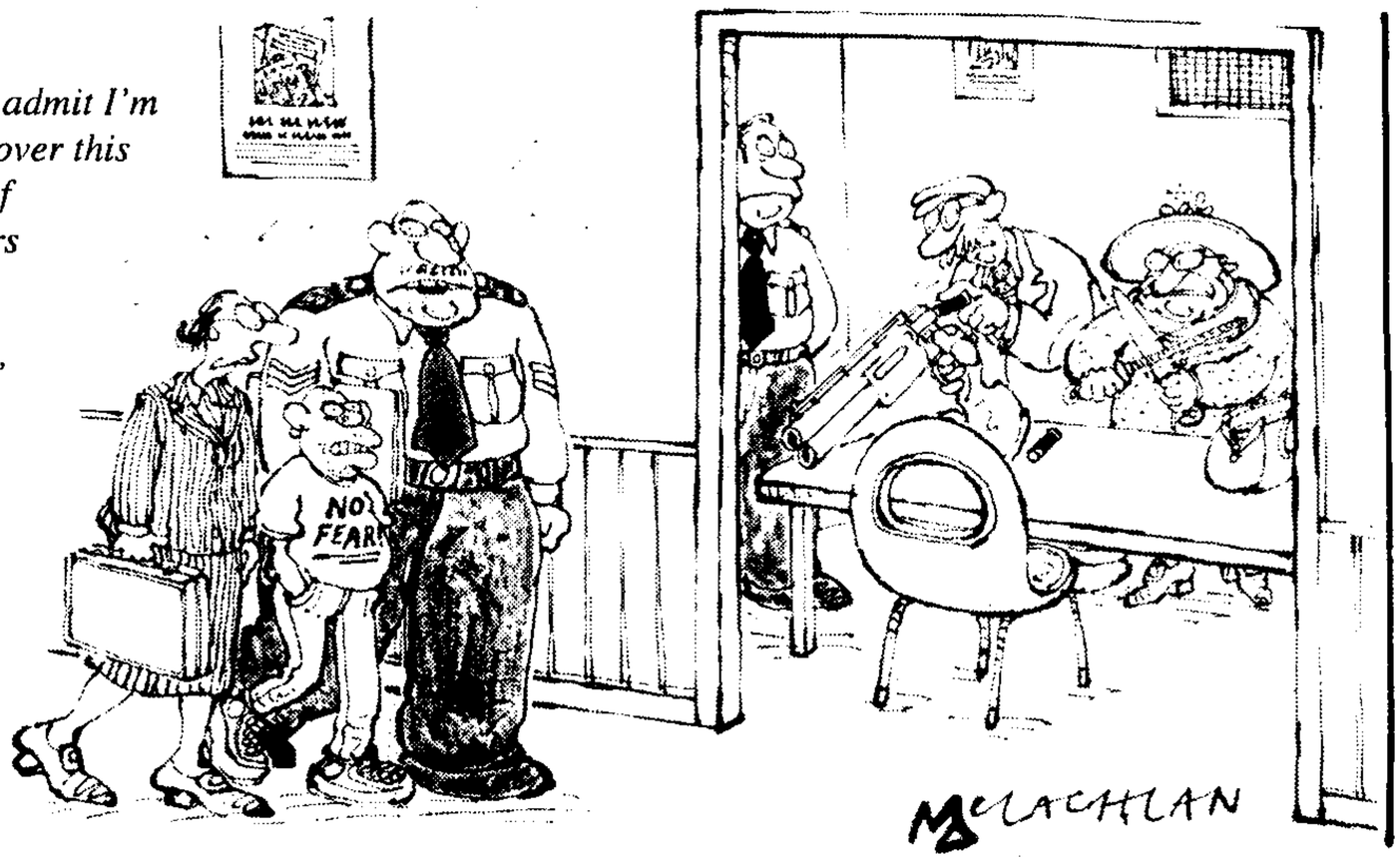
That's not my cup of tea. Never has been, never will be.

Incidentally, I see that the trendy powers-that-be are letting another of these unsavoury types into the country to spread his noxious message at the Royal Albert Hall. Nana Mouskouri is the name. I need hardly remind you that this is the well-known Greek gentleman who prefers to wear his hair long and prance around in ladies' frocks.

No doubt, Mr Blair and his nancy-boy acolytes approve of such Euro-antics. Personally, I will be giving the Festival Hall a wide berth on the night in question. No doubt Mr Mouskouri will occupy himself that evening by casting his bespectacled eyes over some poor fellow's buttocks.

But I can promise you this. They sure as hell won't be mine.

"I must admit I'm uneasy over this policy of offenders meeting their victims"



NEW BOOKS

Harry Thompson

by the late Peter Cook

AUTHOR COOK charts in remorseless detail the sad story of the brilliant comedy producer Harry "Toppo" Thompson who takes London by storm and then leaves his wife and children to live with Victoria Coren. From the heady days of "Have I Got Bad News For You, Darling", the book charts Thompson's relentless decline, due to his addiction to women, until he is reduced to the final indignity of producing the down-market indoor sports quiz *They Think It's All Legover* (Allcock and Tweed, £49.99).

Literary Review

Alice Banned?

The End of Alice
A.M. Homes
(Anchor, £6.99)

"AUGUST 9, 1971, Chatham, New York, twelve-and-a-half-year-old Alice Somerfield is found dead in a motel room. Cause of death: multiple stab wounds — coroner counts sixty-four. Initial five on upper torso, jagged, indicative of struggle; remaining fifty-nine smooth cuts, most likely occurring after death. Victim decapitated, her head positioned..."

OK, let's stop it *right there*. One of the really tedious things about modern cultural life is that its cultural artefacts tend to be a lot less interesting than the processes that guide them into the public orbit.

Ominously enough, the reception attending the "controversial" little number quoted for above is a kind of paradigm of this medium over message routine. As it happens, the publishing history of *The End of Alice* — which in case you don't read the papers concerns a convicted paedophile's correspondence with a teenage girl who is herself fixated on a much younger boy — is rather revealing.

The manuscript of this deathless work was originally offered to a selection of London's finest a good two years ago. At the time it received a universal thumbs down — not merely because of its gritty subject matter (although, for some reason any parent asked to read it tended to observe that it made them feel sick), but because the agent, the rapacious Andrew Wylie, wanted far too much (£50,000) for what was generally felt — and how do I put this, Amy, honey? — *not actually to be a terribly good book in the first place.*

Published to riotously mixed reviews in the States, *Alice* retained a single UK supporter, John Saddler, who used the fact of his departure from HarperCollins (who had turned the ms down) as an opportunity to snap it up for his next paymasters, Transworld's new upmarket Anchor imprint, and presumably for a lot less than the initial asking price.

Another year passes and this hard-core version of *Lolita* eventually stumbles forth to be greeted by, well, quite possibly the most banal and predictable idiots' chorus in recent publishing history. One can forgive the man from the NSPCC who wanted it banned — these are simple people, darlings, who don't know about art; one can even forgive W.H. Smith for declining to stock an item that failed to square with its "family image" (a prohibition that, if logically extended, would surely clear the magazine racks almost to nothing). But oh dear me the pomposity of those liberal broadsheet sermons on literary freedom!

Nadir was reached in a risible piece in the *Independent* by Elizabeth Young (mild-looking Ms Young gets famously excited by fashionable novels about sex and violence and all the literary editors phone her up when one comes out) "defending" A.M. from her detractors, hailing the power of her "art" and suggesting that the explicit is not necessarily pornographic.

Which is true, I suppose. But there is a word for all this — Elizabeth Young's maunderings and the novel that inspired them — and that word is *callow*. To adapt some remarks by George Orwell on the subject of Auden's Spanish war poem about "necessary murders", here are people writing about pain who scarcely seem to realise that pain hurts, and somehow imagine that calling what emerges "art" will miraculously absolve them from the traditional responsibilities of the artist. Essentially, all cherubic little Amy Homes has done is create, in some preening and sub-Nabokov prose, a grand panorama of repulsiveness and titillation... and then stroll away, murmuring over her shoulder to the reader *make what you like of it, but this is where I check out.* Which is fine (or rather not fine) coming from a director of slasher movies, but not from someone whose day job turns out to be teaching creative writing at Columbia University.

The final let-down, of course, is that it's not even a very good novel, and the fault — equally inevitably — lies in the aroma of splayed limbs and bodily fluids that Ms Young so ecstatically commends. This is particularly true of the ending, at which the reader, bludgeoned senseless by the horrors of the preceding 250 pages — can only lackadaisically nod. Odd how knowing what will happen ruins the suspense isn't it, Amy love? Compare this to — say — the scene in *Dombey and Son* (an exalted comparison, but then excitable critics have been making them) where Florence is relieved of her clothes by bad Mrs Brown, and all that's vouchsafed are some fragments of menacing dialogue — and it falls down dead at your feet. Never mind. As I say, this is a thoroughly modern cultural artefact, and therefore more important to broadsheet pundits for what it represents than for what it contains.

As we know, there are no more good and bad characters in fiction; there are only interesting subjects for study. Well, I want the good to triumph and the bad to be damned. And although for very different reasons — something to do with the fact that enough rubbish gets published already — I tend to agree with the man from the NSPCC.

*"To me she'll always be Diana, Princess of **Sales**"*

Books & Bookmen

SERIALISATION SPECIAL

■ *DARK HEART* by former *Grauniad* hack Nick Davies — which is published this month and takes a grim tour through the "hidden Britain" of crackheads, rent-boys and prostitutes — has also revealed some

very rum goings on at the upright *Daily Mail*.

Back in the summer the paper agreed to serialise a three-part extract from the book. But the exercise has left hacks baffled by the influence one of Britain's most powerful brothel-keepers appears to have over their newspaper.

One section of the book recounts in harrowing detail how young girls are recruited by pimps in cities such as Nottingham and supplied to a chain of London brothels controlled by one Mary Daly, a 71-year-old grandmother named in the book as "the biggest whoremonger in London", who is in turn protected from the law by a bent Scotland Yard detective.

Davies writes regularly for the *Mail* despite having leftish leanings. The paper's plan was to outrage and thrill its readers with his revelations about prostitution — Daly's clients include about a dozen MPs — while omitting the author's Spartish conclusion that girls are drawn on to the game by poverty, Tory policies, etc etc.

Odd things started to happen at the beginning of November when the *Mail* picture desk set out to obtain a photograph of kind-hearted old granny Daly, who has run a chain of brothels in the Marylebone area since the 1950s. Daly was tipped off about the paper's interest by a prostitute who had been approached for help by the *Mail*.

On 5 November — the day before the book's publication — a senior executive on the *Mail* proceeded to remove all references to la Daly from the text of the serialisation, which was by now edited and ready to roll. This was not on legal advice, because Davies's evidence against the old madam was copper-bottomed and the book had been thoroughly "legalled" by his publishers anyway. Furthermore, references to other figures in the racket were left untouched.

Why, some *Mail* staff are wonder, does this publicity-shy granny from Wembley have such clout with a senior figure on Britain's most sexually righteous newspaper? It is all very puzzling.

'Bookworm'

footnotes

NOTHING UNTO WARD 2

THE last *Eye* showed how Roger Ward, chief executive of the Association of Colleges (AOC), helped to set up and nurture ELS, the only staffing agency which he recommends to his colleges. Thanks to Ward's efforts, most further education colleges now hire lecturers from ELS on self-employed terms far worse than under the old full-time contracts. Now read on...

ELS is not the only organisation boosted by the energetic Mr Ward. From the early days of his organisation — then called the College Employers Forum (CEF) — Ward worked closely with Burke Ford Reed, which provides private pensions and insurance policies to the education sector.

On 20 September 1995, in his West End offices, Ward met Nigel Manley, deputy managing director of Burke Ford Reed. The meeting discussed the marketing in the colleges of the company's new "corporate health plan". Ward made available a data bank of all CEF's contacts in the colleges, and handed over a copy of CEF's entire mailing list.

Two days later, Manley wrote to Ward with the wonderful news that any data protection problems in handing over AOC's mailing list had been overcome. The letter rejoiced: "Consequently, all principals, clerks and personnel managers will receive a personally-addressed letter supported by the agreed literature and this will be with them in the week commencing 25 September." The mailing had a dramatic effect. By 9 October, a CEF bulletin "reminded members of the national agreement to support and recommend corporate healthcare provision for corporation managerial staffs. Over 70 colleges have now introduced the scheme in one way or another."

In June this year AOC sponsored a pensions conference in Bristol. "Arising from that event," an AOC bulletin reported on 5 September, "AOC has asked its specialist advisors Burke Ford Healthcare to prepare an ill health income replacement scheme." The bulletin recommended a permanent health insurance scheme, organised once again by Burke Ford.

The *Eye* asked Mr Ward about a letter to him dated 9 June 1995, when the puffing of the schemes by AOC and the provision of the AOC mailing list was first being discussed. The letter was from Dominic J. Burke, managing director of Burke Ford Reed, and was headed *Burke Ford Reed Insurance Management Ltd — Consultancy Agreement*. "Dear Roger," wrote Mr Burke. "Just a brief note to confirm that the consultancy agreement has now been finalised and I am expecting to receive this within the course of the next few days. Once I am in receipt of the document I will forward it to you for agreement and signature. In the meanwhile I have now received confirmation from your accountants that the standing order should be made payable to Roger Ward Associates and paid directly to your Midland Bank account in Hampstead High Street. I have given instructions to my Accounts Department for them to proceed with the establishment of the standing order, which will be for the sum of £650 per month effective 1st April 1995.

"I hope this meets with your approval. Kind regards. Dominic."

BFR
BURKE FORD REED
FINANCIAL SERVICES

On 10 September the *Eye* asked Mr Ward: "What is the role at the AOC of the Burke Ford Reed group of companies? Did your company, Roger Ward Associates, have a consultancy agreement with Burke Ford Reed Insurance Management, worth about £8,000 a year to your company? Does this agreement still obtain and if so for how much?"

Mr Ward replied on 24 September: "There is no consultancy agreement between BFR and me. BFR look after my private pension scheme and investments in line with many others in the education sector. The personal account you refer to records my pension fund payments and withdrawals."

Puzzled by this answer, the Eye asked on 22 October why a pension fund payment "should have been made on Mr Burke's instructions to his accountants into your bank account". On 27 October Mr Ward said that Burke Ford Reed had drafted "a consultancy agreement between them and CEF [AOC's predecessor]" — but that CEF had rejected this agreement "because it threatened to restrict the freedom of CEF to seek alternative suppliers".

Mr Ward explained the £650-a-month payments from Burke Ford Reed as follows. He had, he said become "worried" about his previous investments, pension and life assurance with Harley Temple, which had managed his financial affairs for several years before it was taken over by Burke Ford Reed. "It had," he wrote, "been agreed that these (investments, etc) would be administered on a fee basis only with all commissions rebated to the policies. I had challenged Harley Temple over a number of months... because I discovered that commissions had in fact been taken on all my policies. The payments Mr Burke refers to in the letter followed reconciliation of these commissions and his subsequent agreement to refund me, by instalments, the total commissions earned and being earned on my policies in line with the agreement with Harley Temple. The commissions could only then be made to me. This was because rebates to the policies were no longer an option."

FACT TO REMEMBER: The letter from Dominic Burke about the payments makes no reference whatever to pensions, investments or commissions, but only to a consultancy agreement and a standing order.

ANOTHER FACT TO REMEMBER: Mr Ward's enthusiasm for "the freedom to seek alternative suppliers" contrasts oddly with his selection of only one supplier, ELS, of lecturers to colleges. Mr Kevin McNeany, chairman of Nord Anglia, another supplier of part-time lecturers, was so incensed by the revelations in the last *Eye* he has written to the chairman of the AOC, Mr H. Phelps, suggesting that Roger Ward might like to resign.

Blagden & Son

■ **CHRISTOPHER BLAGDEN responded enthusiastically to an advertisement last year for the post of multimedia coordinator at Southgate College, north London.**

He was interviewed and, in the words of the appointing officer, vice-principal Danny Clough, "deemed to be the most suitably qualified and experienced candidate by all the panel members".

Mr Blagden's father, Michael Blagden, the college principal, assures the *Eye*: "I have quite deliberately distanced myself from any connection with his [Christopher's] appointment or his work at college."

Making a killing at SAINSBURY'S

AFTER hearing complaints in September from disgruntled workers at Sainsbury's Houndmills depot at Basingstoke, Hants, the *Eye* asked Sainsbury's about a new set of "cost-cutting" contracts issued to the depot workers last October.

The *Eye* asked: "Since October last year there have been three serious accidents at the plant. Maurice Dinsey died when he was crushed by a fork lift-truck. In separate incidents two other workers, Lee Sherlock and Tony Lewis, were seriously injured. Is this correct and if so does the company in any way associate the accidents with the new contracts?"

Sainsbury's high-powered public relations department went into overdrive to insist there was nothing untoward or extraordinary about the injuries to Lee Sherlock and Tony Lewis; that the new contracts had been agreed with the union; and that above all it would be quite wrong for anyone to comment on any of these matters until the inquest into the death of Maurice Dinsey, where the truth would come out. Responsible as ever, the *Eye* backed off.

UNLAWFULLY KILLED: Maurice Dinsey and wife Julie

The Maurice Dinsey inquest was held in the last week of October. The jury heard that the truck he drove was riddled with faults. Warehouseman John Bateman, who first came across Mr Dinsey as he lay dying on the warehouse floor, recorded his last words: "He said that when he got on the truck he had expected it to go one way and it went the other way and sprung him against the wall and crushed him." Mr Dinsey died in hospital in great pain from appalling pelvic injuries three hours later.

Independent consulting engineer Jim Brooking gave the inquest jury his opinion: that if the truck had been properly maintained the accident would never have happened. The jury had little doubt about their verdict. Unlawful killing.

So that's all White then

■ A FORMER chief executive of a small medical charity has been paid £368,360 — a third of the charity's assets — in a "termination agreement".

In May 1987 a charity called Lady Foresters sold a 52-bed private hospital in Llandudno, north Wales, for £1.6m. When debts had been paid the charity was left with just under a million pounds. It changed its name to North Wales Medical Trust, and the hospital's former chief executive Tony White continued to run the charity on a ten-year "rolling contract".

In 1994 the charity decided to "buy out" Mr White's contract. He was paid a lump sum of £368,360, the equivalent of six and a half years' salary. Mr White then became chairman of the governors.

Last year the charity earned £186,639 in fees from other charities whose work it administers. The total expenditure on all charity work, including staff costs, was £180,792. Mr White's "termination" payment represented double the charity's annual spending.

Mr White tells the *Eye*: "The trust thought it would be cheaper to buy out my contract than to go on paying my salary. I now work for the trust for next to nothing. I am valuable to them because I am able to do the work. I can't think of anything that could possibly be regarded as wrong in this. We do tremendously good work in alcohol and drug abuse, and in South India. My payment was approved by the Charities Commissioners."

Lucille Balls-up

North Wales Child Abuse Tribunal

■ MORE about the "influential person employed by Gwynedd" mentioned in recent *Eyes* and about whom so many allegations have been made at the tribunal on child abuse in north Wales.

The officers in charge of Gwynedd social services department have been asked about the unflattering references to the man in the 1986 secret police report on allegations of child abuse in Gwynedd children's homes.

Mr David Glanville Owen, deputy director of social service at the time, told the inquiry that he had suggested that the man should have been suspended from his job at the time of the police investigation. He said he asked his boss, Lucille Hughes, "whether it was her intention to suspend the man because those were the procedures that we had. She told me she did not wish to suspend him, that it was not necessary."

In her evidence Lucille Hughes agreed that the man in question had been at the centre of the police investigation into abuse and that police had officially suggested to her that "some internal steps may need to be pursued". She described the man in question as "a fairly valuable person", "a big old-fashioned sort of homes superintendent type" whose heart was in the right place. She had interviewed the man at the time and warned him about his behaviour towards the children, with special regard to corporal punishment. But she had not sacked or suspended him.

This rather lenient approach to this influential person accused of abuse in the police report should be contrasted to Lucille Hughes's prompt sacking of homes director Alison Taylor — whose allegations about the man had led to the police inquiry in the first place.

The Hoods' Samaritan

■ HARDENED case workers at Edinburgh Citizens Advice Bureau were upset by the plight of Andrew and Anne Hood, impoverished and desperately ill pensioners.

The couple had fallen behind with payments for repairs to their car — they owe £2,000 to Kwikfit and can't meet the repayments — and without their car they cannot move from their house.

The Hoods' case seemed hopeless until someone at the CAB remembered that Sir Tom Farmer, chairman and chief executive of Kwikfit Holdings, is always proclaiming that he owes the staggering success of his company (not to say his £1.9m salary) to "Christian principles in today's hard business world".

Sandra Blake, the CAB manager, wrote to Kwikfit setting out the statistics of Mr and Mrs Hood's circumstances (weekly income: £106; basic outgoings: £102.75). "We would respectfully request," she wrote, "that you consider writing off the debt as uncollectable." Quick as a flash, back came the reply from Kwikfit's debt managers demanding £2 a week payments from the couple and enclosing the necessary Giro slips "to enable your client to commence these payments immediately".

TEC MATES

■ THE government has announced a "wide-ranging inquiry" into the management of TECs, the "training and enterprise" quangos dreamed up by the Tories in the early 1990s, generously financed by Tory ministers and stuffed with Tory worthies from local business.

Back numbers of the *Eye* may prove a fruitful source of investigation. Especially:

BUDGE FUDGE (4 November 1994). North Notts Tec gave £300,000 to RJB Mining for training miners. On the day the grant was announced a new director joined the Tec board — Richard Budge, owner of RJB Mining.

RIDING HIGH (10 March 1995). Essex Tec gave a £40,000 contract to Raytel Insurance Brokers to run the tec's insurance and pensions business. The chairman of Raytel Insurance was Roy Lawrence, former chairman of Essex Tec. The tec also spent £20,000 on building a riding school on property owned by Mr Lawrence.

TEC MATES (7 April 1995). Sussex Tec gave a £100,000 contract to Caffyns of Eastbourne for supplying cars. Alan Caffyn, chief executive of Caffyns, was on the board of the tec. The tec also gave £25,000 to EPIC Interactive Media for supplying visual training aids. James Braithwaite, chief executive of EPIC, sat on the board of the tec.

TECMATE (2 June 1995). Stockport Tec shelled out £7,594 to the Lee Wood Hotel, Buxton, where the tec board regularly met. John Millican, owner of the hotel, was a director of Stockport Tec.

So VAT's all right then

■ READER Grant McKenzie, of Altrincham, was so shocked by the article in *Eye* 933 about NHS hospital trusts and their accountants Ernst & Young avoiding VAT that he wrote to his MP, Graham Brady, who sent the complaint on to the department of health.

Baroness Jay, the minister of state there, replied as follows: "I can confirm that we are not in favour of NHS bodies seeking to avoid tax that is properly due. Their funding allows for it to be paid. We will be reminding the NHS that tax avoidance schemes are not desirable and are also considering what further action is necessary. In addition, Customs & Excise are investigating whether tax has been legitimately avoided by the scheme to which the *Private Eye* article refers."

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

LORD MOYNE, aka Jonathan Guinness, may soon have much more to worry about than the reviews for *Requiem for a Family Business*, his version of the Guinness/Distillers bid battle with its sympathetic portrait of Ernest "Alzheimer" Saunders, which is published this week.

Scotland Yard's fraud squad is probing the affairs of Access to Justice, closed down by the Department of Timidity & Inaction in September, where he was a director. And the Serious Farce Office is expected soon to be on the case of £49m spirited out of Trustor, the Swedish investment company Moyne took over earlier this year.

Access to Justice was supposed to assist those ineligable for legal aid or who were victims of injustice. Moyne appears to have taken this cause extremely seriously. Not only in Access to Justice but in his Swedish adventure, the rightwing peer and former Monday Club chairman showed a remarkable interest in providing a fresh start to convicted criminals.

At Access to Justice was convicted fraudsman David Mahady, while Moyne shared the Berkeley Square offices of his company Guinness Management, which ran Trustor, with Joseph Falk, better known to the Swedish and Danish police as Joachim Posener, released from jail for fraud earlier this year. Along the way Moyne also found time to write a glowing reference for Birger Ostraat, jailed in Norway last year for running a London-based foreign exchange fraud.

The Yard was called in to Access to Justice after the DTI uncovered evidence that the supposed charity believed charity began at home and had provided access to substantial benefits for Moyne and his co-director, PR man Michael Wynne-Parker. The DTI was also alarmed by the presence of Mahady, disqualified from company management, as the company's financial adviser.

Moyne and his close associate Wynne-Parker had been involved with Access to Justice since its formation two years ago by former Tory MP Sir William Shelton. They resigned in May. Moyne, along with farmer Sir Charles Blois, also a director of Access to Justice, is a director of Wynne-Parker's small PR company Introcom which was paid by Access to Justice and also features in the Swedish saga.

Wynne-Parker played a key role in introducing Moyne to the rich possibilities of doing business in Sweden. It was through the PR man that Moyne met big spending Peter Mattsson, who in turn introduced Moyne to Ostraat and, it seems, Posener. Mattsson was arrested by the Swedes last week as part of the Trustor probe. He, like Posener, was acting as an adviser to Trustor.

Ostraat and Mattsson were initially involved in currency traders Effex International Investment. Mattsson sold out in 1994 and joined Moyne in Mattsson Guinness Securities. Effex collapsed in 1995 costing clients £9m. By then the Swedes had met Prince Charles, former chancellor Norman Lamont and senior Tory backbencher Sir Marcus Fox courtesy of functions at the Carlton Club. Effex organised a 1993 dinner at the Tory hangout. Present were also Moyne and Wynne-Parker.

Moyne wrote of Ostraat: "I have found him to be highly competent, highly intelligent and a man of total integrity." Jailing Ostraat for seven years — the toughest sentence for fraud ever handed out in Norway — the Oslo court declared: "Effex never made a profit and customers resources had to be used to keep the operation going." The "man of total integrity" fled Norway after his appeal failed but was arrested in Paris last April.

Eye 928 raised questions about how Moyne, among the less wealthy members of the Guinness dynasty, was suddenly able to splash out £19m for control of a 52 percent voting stake in Trustor. After all, a few years ago he sold a Gainsborough painting because he was "pushed" for money. Moyne has not explained how he came into such money. Curiously a bank reference came from Barclays — the bank which later received the Trustor cash. The one-time merchant banker insisted to the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, which revealed the police investigation into the Trustor black hole, that he owns the Trustor stake and bought it with his own money.

But such questions appear all the more relevant now that it appears that the company's cash assets were moved to the Barclays account in London soon after Moyne took control in May. He and his associate Lindsay Smallbone — Trustor's chairman and managing director respectively — were the signatories on that account. Cynics might begin to wonder whether perhaps Trustor itself helped to fund the Moyne purchase in any way. Certainly the Swedish businessman who sold the Trustor stake has been less than forthcoming about how and when he was paid. It is no doubt entirely coincidental that Posener was jailed for six years, and served three, for a fraud in which a company was looted of its cash assets. Moyne has yet to explain what Posener was doing in his office.

What the Swedes have uncovered is that all but SK100,000 of the SK620m (£49m) transferred to Barclays was quickly sent onwards to 10 other bank accounts abroad. Barclays confirmed to Trustor's auditors the money was still there at 30 June. Soon after it went walkabout, including to the United States, Holland and Switzerland. Some SK400m (£32m) was sent to Gibraltar and from there to Luxembourg.

Investigators have found evidence of payments to Posener. The convicted fraudsman is said to have had the largest office at Guinness Management suggesting he was somewhat more influential than the noble lord, Smallbone or Mattsson. A payment of $800,000 is said to have been made to Posener who, until the bomb went off two weeks ago, was living large at Claridge's hotel, a short walk from Berkeley Square.

Only last week a £400,000 payment is said to have been made to Introcom International in Gibraltar which presumably may have some connection to Wynne-Parker's company.

The Swedish prosecutor says SK150m (£12m) of the Trustor cash has still to be traced. Announcing his intention to resign and sell his shares, Moyne insisted last week that no Trustor money was missing. That may be correct, but not the issue — which is why the various transfers and payments were made, who was really calling the Trustor shots and what was Posener/Falk's role.

Moyne, who denies being a mere front, was obviously duped. He says recent events had "destroyed my confidence and trust in the Swedish parties who were associated with me personally". After "man of integrity" Ostraat, perhaps a little more checking might have been in order. Trustor may turn out to be the requiem for Lord Moyne.

WHAT is happening at the SFO with Peter Young and the Morgan Grenfell fund management fiasco? More than a year after Young's home was raided, the SFO is still collecting evidence and has yet to interview key players who acted for Young. As a result it will be early next year before a decision is made on whether and with what to charge "Polaroid".

Not that there is any need for a rush to judgment with Young effectively classed as possibly both mad and bad. This follows the obtaining by Young's lawyers of a guardian *ad litem* ruling in the civil proceedings whereby Morgan Grenfell was seeking to seize his assets. What role the still untold tale of Sandra and "Tracy" and the Polaroid pix of their discussion of fund management techniques played in that ruling remains unknown.

The issue for the SFO will be whether it allows this civil device to block any move to prosecute Young — if he is incompetent to defend a civil case how can he face a criminal trial will no doubt run the legal refrain. However, charges of false accounting and fraudulent trading, if not theft, seem available, assuming cooperation from the Swiss lawyers who ran Young's Luxembourg letter box companies through which he hid his deals.

Unless it wants to risk being outmanoeuvred into accepting that Young is unfit to be tried, the SFO will need to charge "Polaroid" so a court can decide whether he can stand trial. That way if he walks it is not another SFO failure. Otherwise it risks great embarrassment — especially if Young stages an "Alzheimer" Saunders-style recovery once the courtroom threat disappears.

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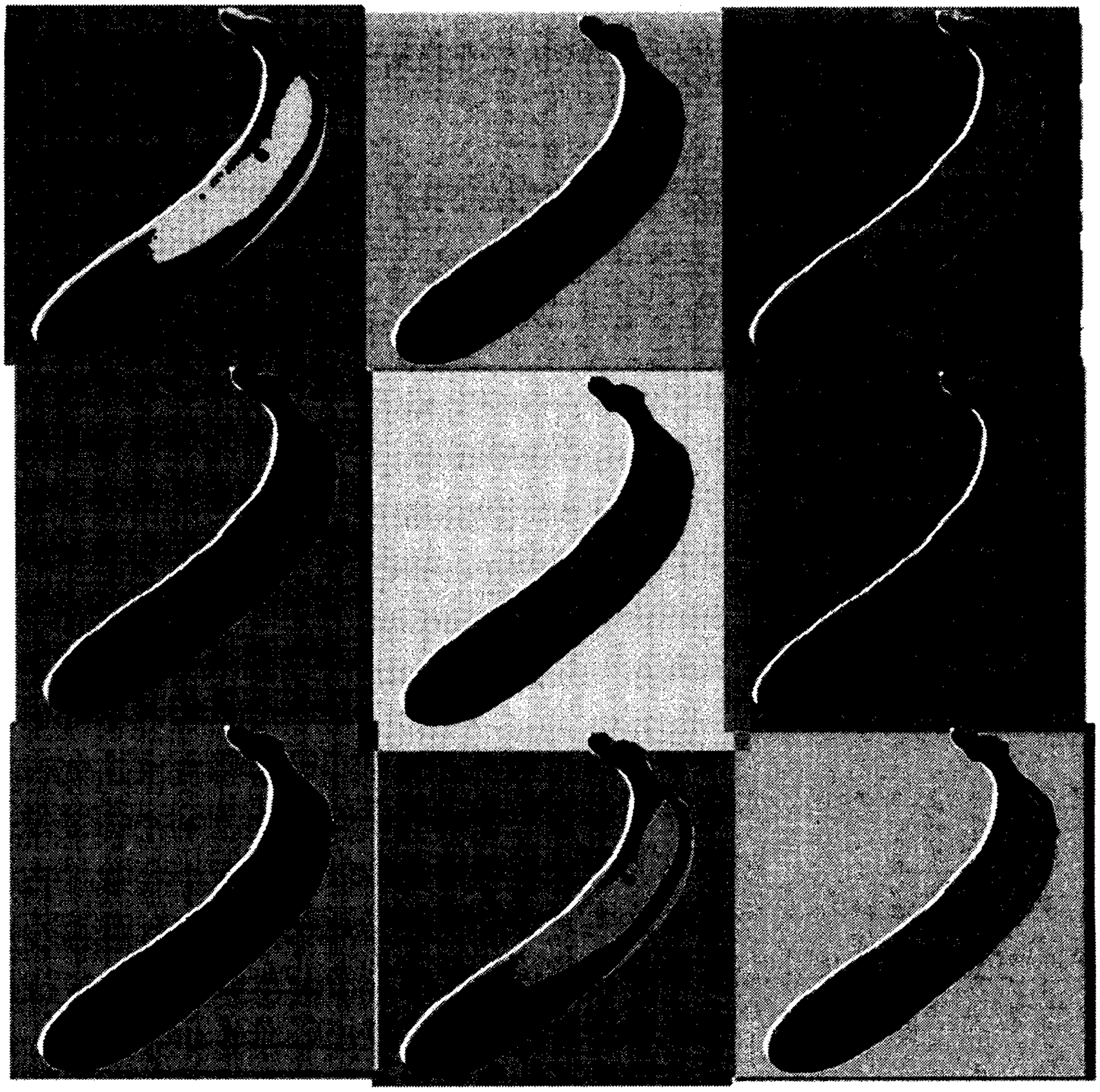

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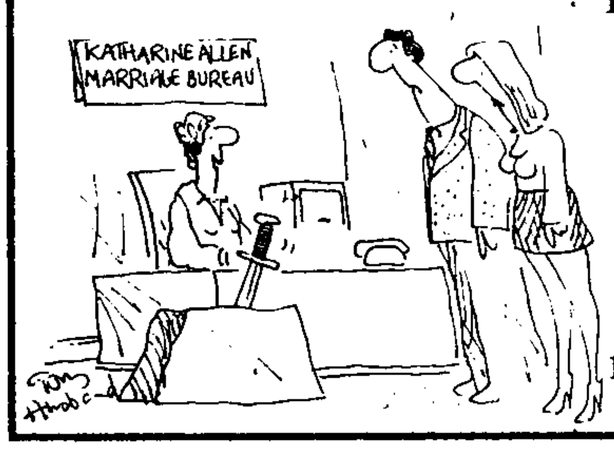

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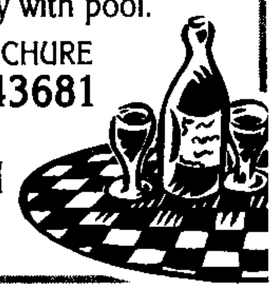

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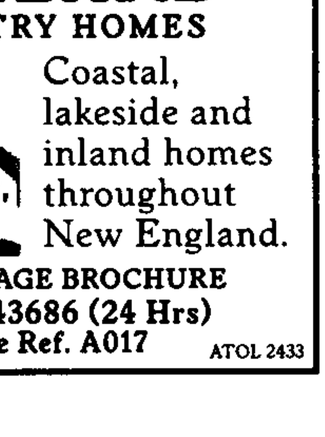

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QUOTE

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Evening Standard

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SPEECHWRITING by MITCH MURRAY. See Page 30.

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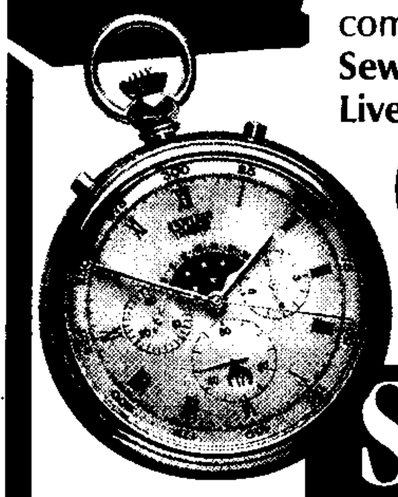

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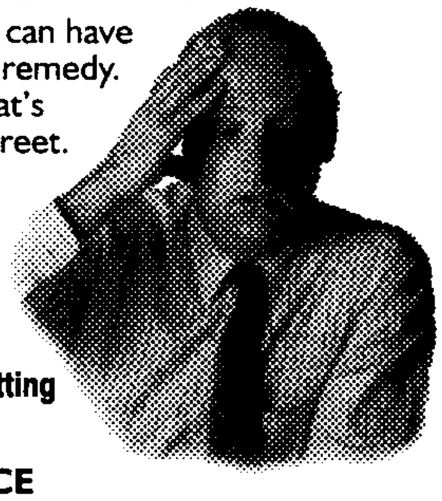

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